


Select Essays Of Elia (1909)



Charles Lamb
John F. Genung



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(GATEWAY SERIES)

SELECT ESSAYS OF ELIA

BY

CHARLES LAMB

EDITED BY

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PROFESSOR IN AMHERST COLLEGE



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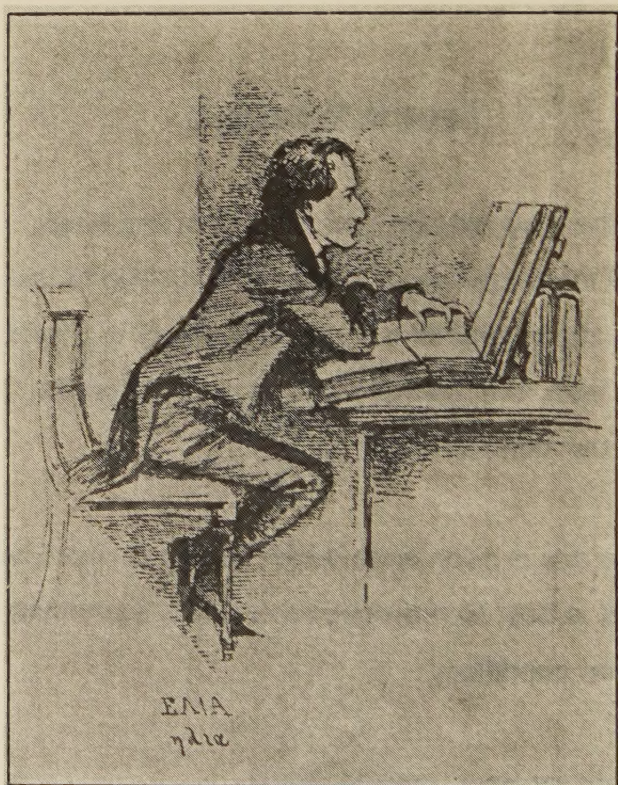
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SKETCH OF CHARLES LAMB BY MACLISE

"The sketch of him in *Fraser's Magazine* gives a true idea of his figure, but no portrait, I am sure, could do justice to his splendid countenance."

— J. FULLER RUSSELL.

GENERAL EDITOR'S NOTE

THIS series of books aims, first, to give the English texts required for entrance to college in a form which shall make them clear, interesting, and helpful to those who are beginning the study of literature; and, second, to supply the knowledge which the student needs to pass the entrance examination. For these two reasons it is called *The Gateway Series*.

The poems, plays, essays, and stories in these small volumes are treated, first of all, as works of literature, which were written to be read and enjoyed, not to be parsed and scanned and pulled to pieces. A short life of the author is given, and a portrait, in order to help the student to know the real person who wrote the book. The introduction tells what it is about, and how it was written, and where the author got the idea, and what it means. The notes at the foot of the page are simply to give the sense of the hard words so that the student can read straight on without turning to a dictionary. The other notes, at the end of the book, explain difficulties and allusions and fine points.

The editors are chosen because of their thorough training and special fitness to deal with the books committed to them, and because they agree with this idea of what a Gateway Series ought to be. They express, in each case, their own views of the books which they edit. Simplicity, thoroughness, shortness, and clearness, — these, we hope, will be the marks of the series.

HENRY VAN DYKE.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	7
INTRODUCTION:	
I. Life and Livelihood	10
II. Where his Life's Real Interests Lay	11
III. Some Traits of his Personality	13
IV. The Essays of Elia	18
LIST OF SELECT ESSAYS:	
I. Christ's Hospital Five-and-Thirty Years Ago (<i>London Magazine</i> , Nov. 1820)	21
II. Mackery End, in Hertfordshire (<i>L. M.</i> , July 1821)	42
III. My First Play (<i>L. M.</i> , Dec. 1821)	50
IV. Barbara S— (<i>L. M.</i> , Apr. 1825. From Last Essays)	57
V. The South-Sea House (<i>L. M.</i> , Aug. 1820)	65
VI. Oxford in the Vacation (<i>L. M.</i> , Oct. 1820)	77
VII. Poor Relations (<i>L. M.</i> , May 1823. From Last Essays)	87
VIII. Imperfect Sympathies (<i>L. M.</i> , Aug. 1821)	97
IX. Old China (<i>L. M.</i> , Mar. 1823. From Last Essays)	109
X. Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading (<i>L. M.</i> , July 1822. From Last Essays)	118
XI. Grace Before Meat (<i>L. M.</i> , Nov. 1821)	127
XII. A Dissertation upon Roast Pig (<i>L. M.</i> , Sept. 1822)	138
XIII. The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers (<i>L. M.</i> , May 1822)	149
XIV. Dream-Children; A Reverie (<i>L. M.</i> , Jan. 1822)	160
XV. The Superannuated Man (<i>L. M.</i> , May 1825. From Last Essays)	166
NOTES	177

PREFACE

CHARLES LAMB's distinction as the best-loved of English authors may fitly suggest the chief aim of the editorial work that has been done for this edition of his select Essays. It is with Charles Lamb himself, his personality, as represented in his sympathies, his friendliness and charity, his odd yet winning tastes, his delicate and kindly humour, that we become acquainted as we read. He did not write these essays to convey circumstantial information; if we look for this, indeed, we find ourselves, as likely as not, quite at sea about such factual things as names, places, and dates. We do not read him for information or didactic instruction, but for something finer and better, something that, beyond the reading, inspires in us a love for the man himself.

Accordingly, the object of the appended notes is, first, to promote the student's interest in the essay itself, and in what the author has at heart, rather than in something extraneous — grammar or philology or items of history — which may serve to make the reading not a pleasure but a task-work set for eventual examination. Secondly, the notes, as means to this end, shall aim to bring out, for students of the grade contemplated in this series, such literary ways as serve to mirror the spirit of the text; for the writer's mood finds its fitting manner of expression, in which every word and phrase has its value. Charles Lamb is a delightful man to know; and

it is hoped that this edition may, while it helps the reader to know him better, inspire the wish to continue the acquaintance.

The text here followed is the text of the first collected edition: *Essays of Elia*, 1823, *Last Essays of Elia*, 1833. The spelling has been for the most part conformed to the general usage of the Gateway Series; Lamb's peculiarities of punctuation, however, have been followed, because they are so truly a part of his style. In the preparation of the notes, special acknowledgment is due to the definitive edition of Mr. E. V. Lucas, who has laid all succeeding editors of Lamb under obligation for the research work he has saved them, — work which, while it had to be done, in the nature of the case needed only once doing. The editor is indebted also to the kindness of Messrs. G. P. Putnam's Sons, publishers of the Lucas edition of Lamb's works and of Lucas's *Life of Charles Lamb*, for permission to use as frontispiece MacIise's sketch portrait.

INTRODUCTION

It is not by eminence of style or passion or thought that Charles Lamb's writings, and especially his *Essays of Elia*, make their distinctive impress on English literature. It is rather by what they reveal of a very peculiar yet, with all untoward traits, a very sterling and lovable personality. We seem as we read to be in the presence, not of an author concerned to give his ideas a good literary showing, but of a very companionable man whose words frankly reflect his personal likes and dislikes, his individual tastes, whims, fancies, oddities, nay his very weaknesses and faults: and all with such geniality and charm as to have earned for their author the distinction of being the best-loved man in English letters.

This love is accorded to Charles Lamb; and yet the personality whose thoughts and sentiments are so freely uttered masks itself under an assumed name. It professes to speak, not as Charles Lamb, but as James Fia; and thus the author holds himself free to take liberties with literal fact and with actualities of persons and places. More than this. While James Elia is accurately Charles Lamb and not in any artistic sense a dramatized person speaking in character, yet he is not

all of Charles Lamb; he is only so much as his author chooses to reveal. And of Charles Lamb's real life he hides as much as he reveals; hides, for a cardinal instance, a constant experience which made his whole life a tragedy. Of this, as he is reticent about it or passes it off in jest, our introduction must speak, because its effects in the tone of Elia's style are subtle and profound. Other characteristic things, too, in the life of Charles Lamb as distinguished from James Elia must come up for mention before the *Essays* are left to speak for themselves.

I

Life and Livelihood. — The external facts and conditions of Charles Lamb's life are soon told. The son of John Lamb, a clerk or private secretary to a bencher of the Inner Temple, he was born in Crown Office Row, London, February 10, 1775. In his eighth year he became a blue-coat boy in the famous charity-school of Christ's Hospital, and remained there for seven years, during which time his most intimate friendship, a friendship terminated only by death, was with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the "inspired charity-boy," afterwards the famous poet and philosopher. Precluded by an impediment of speech, and perhaps by temperament, from promise of success in the church or the learned professions, Lamb gave up the idea of going to the university. After leaving school in 1789, he in his turn, though not till nearly two years had passed, became a clerk; work-

ing first in the South-Sea House under his elder brother John for six months; then, through the influence of his father's kind employer Samuel Salt, obtaining a clerkship in the accountant's office of the East India Company. Here he worked, advancing through various grades of promotion, until at fifty years of age he was retired on a pension, and became — as he described it — a "superannuated man." He lived nine years after this, years not so happy as those of his clerkship, and died December 27, 1834.

II

Where his Life's Real Interests Lay. — There is no occasion here to detail the circumstances of the modest life that as a London clerk he had to live: the changes of lodging, the cares and shifts of narrow means, the round of routine in which the best hours of his working years were spent. All these we could sufficiently imagine if they counted for our purpose; they were the conditions of a life in which most men would be content, or necessitated by personal limitation, to be clerks and nothing more. And his clerkship, at least, supplying him a steady income, freed him from the necessity of writing for a living, a thing not suited to his genius. It was, however, the reaction from the routine of the desk, the reaction of native resource and genius, which brought Lamb to his true calling. The world in which we become acquainted with him was larger: that inner world of the

heart and the imagination which has no bounds and no poverty. The realm of thought and sentiment, to which he had been introduced by native taste and the associations of school life, remained the sphere of his real interests; he was not a clerk at heart, but a companion of literary men, a lover of art, poetry, drama, and a sharer in the finest literary values of the ages.

From his early years he was conversant with books, especially books of classic poetry and of the seventeenth century literature. His tastes were notably keen for works to which age or some eccentricity of the writer had given a flavor of quaintness, works like those of Robert Burton, Sir Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor, and Thomas Fuller; his mind seemed to be formed, indeed, much after their pattern. Shakespeare and the Jacobean dramatists, also, were great favorites of his. For books of history or philosophy or science, or for the current movements of thought and event, he had little care. "When a new book comes out, I read an old one," was the humorous remark by which he defined his literary likings. Of the prosaic and uncoloured facts of life he had enough, doubtless, in the dull associations of his accountant's office; and of constant familiarity with irksome endurance and domestic anxiety he had, as we shall see, more than enough. His literary activities were in part a wise recourse and refuge from these, an escape to the inner world of the spirit.

He wrote as he could command time and occasion: some poetry, but mostly prose, for which his genius was

better adapted; a story of quiet and somewhat sombre sentiment, *Rammond Gray*; two or three unsuccessful plays, better fitted for reading than for the stage; tales from the *Odyssey* re-told for children, tales from Shakespeare also for children, written in collaboration with his sister; and some very penetrative critical estimates of the Elizabethan dramatists, which won him an eminent place among critics for his power to interpret the finer spirit of literature.

The work, however, by which he is best known and for which he is most loved is the *Essays of Elia*, and *Later Essays of Elia*, contributed to the *London Magazine* from 1820 to 1825, and later collected in two volumes. In these his peculiar genius, coming late to flower, found its true and inimitable expression; a genius in the free play of which one of the most charming personalities of English literature is revealed.

III

Some Traits of his Personality. — We do not come to these *Essays of Elia* for the sake of any precise and formal information, nor for didactic precepts of life and conduct; and yet we find ourselves gaining from them direction of a finer and more vital kind: we find ourselves also, we hardly know how, on better terms with life. The secret lies in the fact that they are the mirror of a personality which, with all its lightness, its whimsy, its sly humour, has the sweetest and finest elements of

1 life at heart. He weaves these essays together out of
the simplest materials : his childhood experiences, his
3,2 school-days, his old-time friends, his chance acquaint-
3,4 ances, casual happenings of his life, quaint fancies, odd
7 scraps of reading and quotation; yet out of these all
(E9) the main effect is that of a kindly personality in whose
tastes and sentiments we share with delight. It will be
the task, or rather pleasure, of our reading to enter pro-
gressively into the spirit of these traits as they appear
in essay after essay ; so they need not be analysed or
enlarged upon here.

In order, however, to understand the man better as
we read, we may bear in mind some circumstances of
his literary and domestic life.

1. And first, as to why and in what sort he turned to
the literary life at all ; he, to outward seeming, merely
an accountant with a bent that way. Spending his best
hours every day in the routine of his clerkship, he must
needs make his literary pursuits a by-labour, an avoca-
tion. They had not the system or absorbing strenuous-
ness of a principal motive, like, for instance, Gibbon's
devotion to a historic theme or Tennyson's single-minded
consecration to the great values of poetry ; nor, on the
other hand, were they work for a living. They dealt
rather with the incidents and sentiments that come into
daily life by the way, and come unforced. Lamb's mind
turned naturally to the quaint old writers of the
past ; not, however, as an investigator or as a critic ;
rather in a real affection, in which he dwelt and com-

muned with them as with familiar friends. His relation to his books was almost a personal one. Just so with his writings, whose personal quality is their chief strain, much like confessions; sentiments of the gentler and more delicate kind, in which his humours, his likings, and dislikes, in a word, his personal sympathies, were freely reflected. His sympathies, but not, in such degree his antipathies. It was not in him to be a good hater; at most he could confess to imperfect sympathies. He could indeed see keenly into men's weaknesses and failings; but the redeeming traits or the extenuating conditions were also so sympathetically realized that his judgments of human nature were never severe. It was not with the great passions of life that he was concerned, nor with the romantic sentiments; rather with the common affections, and with the gentle gusts of humour and pathos in which the whole world can smile and weep together.

2. As his relation to books was one of affection, so also his relation to his personal acquaintances. Nothing is more salient in Lamb's life than his rare talent for friendship. We get a fair idea of the range and quality of this from his letters, which, as collected and published, are among the not too numerous classics of English epistolary literature. A better idea, however, is obtained from his famous Wednesday evenings; an institution, if a thing so informal may be thus termed, comparable to the well-known Dr. Johnson Club of an earlier time. The modest lodgings of Charles and

Mary Lamb, wherever they were, were a kind of rallying place for friends and admirers who lived or happened to be stopping in London. There were artists, men of thought, and men of letters among them; such leading spirits as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Godwin, Manning, Barton, Leigh Hunt, Carey; also a goodly proportion of odd or eccentric characters, for whom Lamb had an especial fondness and attraction. Here all spoke their minds with utmost freedom, and all could agree to differ. The things new and old that belonged to the prevailing literary spirit of the time were here exploited. Nor were these gatherings merely a clearing-house of literary ideas. According to the free custom of those days, the "plain living and high thinking" of the occasion included a strongly convivial element, of which Lamb's genial personality was the heart and soul. Here we have to mention Lamb's chief failing— It must be owned that his love of good-fellowship was rather too much for temperate habits; he was too fond of drink. His wit also, and his tricksey spirit of reaction against whatever was stupid or pretentious, sometimes carried him away, so that he was betrayed, especially when "mellowed" with an evening's conviviality, into remarks or conduct which belied his real seriousness of mind and kindness of heart. None of this, however, was laid up against him, or ever alienated a friend. He was his own worst enemy, and his very weaknesses were in a way charming and lovable.

3. If his manner of speech and his buoyancy of humour seemed to indicate, to a superficial or unsympathetic observer, a certain shallowness or levity of character, there was that in his daily life, unspoken yet well known to his friends, which disproved all this. Here we come to the tragic event which largely determined the conditions of Charles Lamb's life, and which must be reckoned with in estimating the vital elements of his writings. On September 22, 1796, when he was in his twenty-second year, his sister Mary, ten years older, in a sudden fit of mania killed her mother. She recovered her reason, but all her life long (and she lived to survive him) was subject to recurrent attacks of insanity, which gradually increased in length and frequency. To keep her from permanent detention in a hospital, Charles gave "his solemn engagement that he would take her under his care for life." He found her a home in a private family, and after the death of his parents brother and sister lived together, he giving up the thought of marrying. She is the Bridget Elia of his essays, of whom he says, "we house together, old bachelor and maid, in a sort of double singleness." A congenial domestic life it was, in which the two were quite at one in literary and social interests; yet in thinking of it we remember what a lifelong sacrifice he cheerfully and silently underwent for it; we think also how often and sadly it was interrupted for months at a time by her periods of insanity, when she must needs be removed from home. We cannot tax with

levity or frivolity the character of one whose life, under the perpetual tension of anxiety, was so nobly lived.

As we look for the effects of this tragic undercurrent of Lamb's life in his works, we find it manifested in very peculiar ways, yet psychologically true to human nature. His prevailing lightness, humour, oddity, were in effect a reaction, an escape. The criticism has been made that he evaded serious things and ignored the deep issues of life. There is some colour of truth in the charge. But for a man of his temperament — for he himself once had a period of madness — to have brooded on his experience, or to have drawn it out into literature, would have been his ruin. Doubtless his safety and sanity lay in the farthest possible escape from the thought and anguish of it. And the escape was made, not merely toward eccentricity, nor does the charm of his works lie in that; it was made more truly toward the kindliness, the tenderness, the delicate regard for the unfortunate, the loving sympathy, which pervade his writings. To Carlyle, the strenuous Puritan, he might seem almost an imbecile; to Thackeray, who himself knew a similar sorrow, he was "Saint Charles."

IV

The Essays of Elia. — The *Essays of Elia* were contributed to the *London Magazine*; the first one, entitled *The South-Sea House*, appearing in the number for August, 1820. Later they were gathered and published

in book form, the first series in 1823, the second in 1833. As periodical articles they were a very popular feature of the *Magazine*. Only one edition of them in book form, however, appeared in the remaining twelve years of Lamb's life; though the editions that have been published since his death are "practically uncountable."

For the name Elia (which it seems he pronounced Ellia), Lamb took the name of a clerk at the South-Sea House, an Italian, whom he had known there. Visiting the place afterward in order to laugh with the original Elia over his unasked use of the name, Lamb found that the clerk had been dead eleven months; "so," he says, "the name has fairly devolved to me, I think; and 'tis all he has left me."

The essays here selected from *Essays of Elia* and *Last Essays of Elia* do not follow the order in which they were first published in the *London Magazine* and later collected in two volumes. Rather, as they are largely in the nature of reminiscence, they will be found to follow roughly the course of Lamb's life, from memories of school, childhood, and youth, to his retiring from his position as clerk in the East India House; so, first seeing him as a boy in Christ's Hospital, we leave him as he becomes a "Superannuated Man." Besides these papers so charged with autobiographical matter, selections VII to XIII form a somewhat like-minded group, giving a kind of description of Lamb's ruling tastes and sympathies.

In leaving now the essays to speak for themselves, we may close this Introduction with a few words from E. V. Lucas's *Life of Charles Lamb*:¹ —

"The life of Charles Lamb . . . is the narrative of one who was a man and brother first, an East India clerk next, and a writer afterwards. Hence . . . the story is that rather of a private individual who chanced to have literary genius than of a man of letters in the ordinary sense of the term."

Of the *Essays of Elia* Lucas says:—

"Their 'facts' are not of the utilitarian order; their humour leads rarely to loud laughter, rather to the quiet smile; they are not stories, they are not poems; they are not difficult enough to suggest 'mental improvement' to those who count it loss unless they are puzzled, nor simple enough for those who demand of their authors no confounded nonsense. — At the same time/English literature has nothing that in its way is better than *Elia's* best. The blend of sanity, sweet reasonableness, tender fancy, high imagination, sympathetic understanding of human nature, and humour, now wistful, now frolicsome, with literary skill of unsurpassed delicacy, makes *Elia* unique."

¹ Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb*, Vol. II, p. 60.

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL

FIVE-AND-THIRTY YEARS AGO

IN Mr. Lamb's "Works," published a year or two since, I find a magnificent eulogy on my old school,¹ such as it was, or now appears to him to have been, between the years 1782 and 1789. It happens, very oddly, that my own standing at Christ's was nearly corresponding with his; and, with all gratitude to him for his enthusiasm for the cloisters, I think he has contrived to bring together whatever can be said in praise of them, dropping all the other side of the argument most ingeniously.

I remember L. at school; and can well recollect that he had some peculiar advantages, which I and others of his school-fellows had not. His friends lived in town, and were near at hand; and he had the privilege of going to see them, almost as often as he wished, through some invidious distinction, which was denied to us. The present worthy sub-treasurer to the Inner Temple can explain how that happened. He had his tea and hot rolls in a morning, while we were battenning upon our quarter of a

¹ Recollections of Christ's Hospital. [C. L.]

The notes which Lamb himself appended to the text, which are here numbered continuously with the rest, are marked by the letters C. L. in brackets.

penny loaf — our *crug*¹ — moistened with attenuated small beer, in wooden piggins, smacking of the pitched leathern jack it was poured from. Our Monday's milk porridge, blue and tasteless, and the pease soup of Saturday, coarse and choking, were enriched for him with a slice of "extraordinary bread and butter" from the hot-loaf of the Temple. The Wednesday's mess of millet, somewhat less repugnant — (we had three banyan² to four meat days in the week) — was endeared to his palate with a lump
 10 of double-refined,³ and a smack of ginger (to make it go down the more glibly) or the fragrant cinnamon. In lieu of our *half-pickled* Sundays, or *quite fresh* boiled beef on Thursdays (strong as *caro equina*),⁴ with detestable marigolds floating in the pail to poison the broth — our scanty
 15 mutton crags on Fridays — and rather more savoury, but grudging, portions of the same flesh, rotten-roasted⁵ or rare, on the Tuesdays (the only dish which excited our appetites, and disappointed our stomachs, in almost equal proportion) — he had his hot plate of roast veal, or the
 20 more tempting griskin⁶ (exotics unknown to our palates), cooked in the paternal kitchen (a great thing), and brought him daily by his maid or aunt ! I remember the good old relative (in whom love forbade pride) squatting down

¹ This word, which the context defines, is local slang, still in use at the school.

² Vegetarian. Name of a British navy regulation.

³ *I.e.* sugar.

⁴ Horse-flesh.

⁵ *I.e.* overdone.

⁶ "The small bones taken out of the sitch of a Laced-pig." *Century Dictionary*. A provincial English word.

upon some odd stone in a by-nook of the cloisters, disclosing the viands (of higher regale than those cates which the ravens ministered to the Tishbite); and the contending passions of L. at the unfolding. There was love for the bringer, shame for the thing brought, and the manner of its bringing; sympathy for those who were too many to share in it; and, at top of all, hunger (eldest, strongest of the passions!) predominant, breaking down the stony fences of shame, and awkwardness, and a troubling over-consciousness.

I was a poor friendless boy. My parents, and those who should care for me, were far away. Those few acquaintances of theirs, which they could reckon upon being kind to me in the great city, after a little forced notice, which they had the grace to take of me on my first arrival in town, soon grew tired of my holiday visits. They seemed to them to recur too often, though I thought them few enough; and, one after another, they all failed me, and I felt myself alone among six hundred playmates.

O the cruelty of separating a poor lad from his early homestead! The yearnings which I used to have towards it in those unfledged years! How, in my dreams, would my native town (far in the west) come back, with its church, and trees, and faces! How I would wake weeping, and in the anguish of my heart exclaim upon sweet Calne in Wiltshire!

To this late hour of my life, I trace impressions left by the recollection of those friendless holidays. The long warm days of summer never return but they bring with

them a gloom from the haunting memory of those *whole-day-leaves*, when, by some strange arrangement, we were turned out, for the livelong day, upon our own hands, whether we had friends to go to, or none. I remember
5 those bathing-excursions to the New River, which L. recalls with such relish, better, I think, than he can — for he was a home-seeking lad, and did not much care for such water-pastimes : — How merrily we would sally forth into the fields ; and strip under the first warmth of the sun ; and
10 wanton¹ like young dace in the streams ; getting us appetites for noon, which those of us that were pennyless (our scanty morning crust long since exhausted) had not the means of allaying — while the cattle, and the birds, and the fishes, were at feed about us, and we had nothing to sat-
15 isfy our cravings — the very beauty of the day, and the exercise of the pastime, and the sense of liberty, setting a keener edge upon them ! — How faint and languid, finally, we would return, towards nightfall, to our desired morsel, half-rejoicing, half-reluctant, that the hours of our uneasy
20 liberty had expired !

It was worse in the days of winter, to go prowling about the streets objectless — shivering at cold windows of print-shops, to extract a little amusement ; or haply, as a last resort, in the hope of a little novelty, to pay a fifty-times
25 repeated visit (where our individual faces should be as well known to the warden as those of his own charges) to the Lions in the Tower — to whose levée, by courtesy immemorial, we had a prescriptive title to admission.

¹ Note that the word *wanton* is here used as a verb.

L's governor¹ (so we called the patron who presented us to the foundation) lived in a manner under his paternal roof. Any complaint which he had to make was sure of being attended to. This was understood at Christ's, and was an effectual screen to him against the severity of 5 masters, or worse tyranny of the monitors. The oppressions of these young brutes are heart-sickening to call to recollection. I have been called out of my bed, and *waked for the purpose*, in the coldest winter nights—and this not once, but night after night—in my shirt, to 10 receive the discipline of a leathern thong, with eleven other sufferers, because it pleased my callow overseer, when there has been any talking heard after we were gone to bed, to make the six last beds in the dormitory, where the youngest children of us slept, answerable for 15 an offence they neither dared to commit, nor had the power to hinder.—The same execrable tyranny drove the younger part of us from the fires, when our feet were perishing with snow; and, under the cruellest penalties, forbade the indulgence of a drink of water, when we lay in 20 sleepless summer nights, fevered with the season, and the day's sports.

There was one H——,² who, I learned, in after days, was seen expiating some maturer offence in the hulks.³

¹ Samuel Salt, under whose roof Lamb's father lived; a member of Parliament, and a governor of the South-Sea House.

² According to a *Key* which Lamb furnished to some of his essays, the name was Hodges.

³ Old or dismantled ships, formerly used in England for prisons.

(Do I flatter myself in fancying that this might be the planter of that name, who suffered — at Nevis, I think, or St. Kitts, — some few years since? My friend Tobin¹ was the benevolent instrument of bringing him to the gallows.) This petty Nero actually branded a boy, who had offended him, with a red-hot iron; and nearly starved forty of us, with exacting contributions, to the one half of our bread, to pamper a young ass, which, incredible as it may seem, with the connivance of the nurse's daughter (a young flame of his) he had contrived to smuggle in, and keep upon the leads of the *ward*, as they called our dormitories. This game went on for better than a week, till the foolish beast, not able to fare well but he must cry roast meat — happier than Caligula's minion, could he have kept his own counsel — but, foolisher, alas! than any of his species in the fables — waxing fat, and kicking, in the fullness of bread, one unlucky minute would needs proclaim his good fortune to the world below; and, laying out his simple throat, blew such a ram's horn blast, as (toppling down the walls of his own Jericho) set concealment any longer at defiance. The client was dismissed, with certain attentions, to Smithfield; but I never understood that the patron underwent any censure on the occasion. This was in the stewardship of L.'s admired Perry.

Under the same *facile* administration, can L. have forgotten the cool impunity with which the nurses used to carry away openly, in open platters, for their own tables,

¹ James Webbe Tobin, of Nevis, died 1814.

one out of two of every hot joint, which the careful matron had been seeing scrupulously weighed out for our dinners ? These things were daily practised in that magnificent apartment, which L. (grown connoisseur since, we presume) praises so highly for the grand paintings "by Verrio, and others," with which it is "hung round and adorned." But the sight of sleek well-fed blue-coat boys in pictures was, at that time, I believe, little consolatory to him, or us, the living ones, who saw the better part of our provisions carried away before our faces by harpies ; and ourselves reduced (with the Trojan in the hall of Dido)

To feed our mind with idle portraiture.

L. has recorded the repugnance of the school to *gags*,¹ or the fat of fresh beef boiled ; and sets it down to some superstition. But these unctuous morsels are never grateful to young palates (children are universally fat-haters) and in strong, coarse, boiled meats, *unsalted*, are detestable. A *gag-eater* in our time was equivalent to a *goul*, and held in equal detestation. —² suffered under the imputation.

20

——— 'Twas said

He ate strange flesh.

He was observed, after dinner, carefully to gather up the remnants left at his table (not many, nor very choice fragments, you may credit me) — and, in an especial manner, these disreputable morsels, which he would convey away,

¹ A slang word, still current.

² Lamb's *Key* does not supply this name.

and secretly stow in the settle that stood at his bedside. None saw when he ate them. It was rumoured that he privately devoured them in the night. He was watched, but no traces of such midnight practices were discoverable. Some reported, that, on leave-days, he had been seen to carry out of the bounds a large blue check handkerchief, full of something. This then must be the accursed thing. Conjecture next was at work to imagine how he could dispose of it. Some said he sold it to the
10 beggars. This belief generally prevailed. He went about moping. None spake to him. No one would play with him. He was excommunicated ; put out of the pale of the school. He was too powerful a boy to be beaten, but he underwent every mode of that negative punishment which
15 is more grievous than many stripes. Still he persevered. At length he was observed by two of his school-fellows, who were determined to get at the secret, and had traced him one leave-day for that purpose, to enter a large worn-out building, such as there exist specimens of in Chancery
20 Lane, which are let out to various scales of pauperism with open door, and a common staircase. After him they silently slunk in, and followed by stealth up four flights, and saw him tap at a poor wicket, which was opened by an aged woman, meanly clad. Suspicion was now
25 ripened into certainty. The informers had secured their victim. They had him in their toils. Accusation was formally preferred and retribution most signal was looked for. Mr. Hathaway, the then steward (for this happened a little after my time), with that patient sagacity which

tempered all his conduct, determined to investigate the matter before he proceeded to sentence. The result was, that the supposed mendicants, the receivers or purchasers of the mysterious scraps, turned out to be the parents of —, an honest couple come to decay, — whom this seasonable supply had, in all probability, saved from mendicancy; and that this young stork, at the expense of his own good name, had all this while been only feeding the old birds! — The governors on this occasion, much to their honour, voted a present relief to the family of —, and presented him with a silver medal. The lesson which the steward read upon RASH JUDGMENT, on the occasion of publicly delivering the medal to —, I believe, would not be lost upon his auditory. — I had left school then, but I well remember —. He was a tall, shambling youth, with a cast in his eye, not at all calculated to conciliate hostile prejudices. I have since seen him carrying a baker's basket. I think I heard he did not do quite so well by himself, as he had done by the old folks.

I was a hypochondriac lad; and the sight of a boy in fetters, upon the day of my first putting on the blue clothes, was not exactly fitted to assuage the natural terrors of initiation. I was of tender years, barely turned of seven; and had only read of such things in books, or seen them but in dreams. I was told he had *run away*. This was the punishment for the first offence. — As a novice I was soon after taken to see the dungeons. These were little, square, Bedlam cells, where a boy could just lie at his length upon straw and a blanket — a mattress, I think, was afterwards

substituted — with a peep of light, let in askance, from a prison-orifice at top, barely enough to read by. Here the poor boy was locked in by himself all day, without sight of any but the porter who brought him his bread and water —
 5 who *might not speak to him*; — or of the beadle; who came twice a week to call him out to receive his periodical chastisement, which was almost welcome, because it separated him for a brief interval from solitude: — and here he was shut up by himself *of nights*, out of the reach of any sound,
 10 to suffer whatever horrors the weak nerves, and superstition incident to his time of life, might subject him to.¹ This was the penalty for the second offence. — Wouldst thou like, Reader, to see what became of him in the next degree?

15 The culprit, who had been a third time an offender, and whose expulsion was at this time deemed irreversible, was brought forth, as at some solemn *auto-da-fé*,² arrayed in uncouth and most appalling attire — all trace of his late “watchet³ weeds” carefully effaced, he was exposed in a
 20 jacket, resembling those which London lamplighters formerly delighted in, with a cap of the same. The effect

¹ One or two instances of lunacy, or attempted suicide, accordingly, at length convinced the governors of the impolicy of this part of the sentence, and the midnight torture to the spirits was dispensed with. — This fancy of dungeons for children was a sprout of Howard's brain; for which (saving the reverence due to Holy Paul) methinks, I could willingly spit upon his statue. [C. L.]

² Lit. act of faith. The Spanish term for an execution of heretics under the Inquisition.

³ Blue. The phrase taken from an ode by Collins.

of this divestiture was such as the ingenious devisers of it could have anticipated. With his pale and frighted features, it was as if some of those disfigurements in Dante had seized upon him. In this disguisement he was brought into the hall (*L.'s favourite state-room*),¹ where awaited him the whole number of his school-fellows, whose joint lessons and sports he was thenceforth to share no more; the awful presence of the steward, to be seen for the last time; of the executioner beadle, clad in his state robe for the occasion; and of two faces more, of direr import, because never but in these extremities visible. These were governors; two of whom, by choice, or charter, were always accustomed to officiate at these *Ultima Supplicia*;² not to mitigate (so at least we understood it), but to enforce the uttermost stripe. Old Bamber Gascoigne, and Peter 15 Aubert, I remember, were colleagues on one occasion, when the beadle turning rather pale, a glass of brandy was ordered to prepare him for the mysteries. The scourging was, after the old Roman fashion, long and stately. The lictor accompanied the criminal quite round 20 the hall. We were generally too faint with attending to the previous disgusting circumstances, to make accurate report with our eyes of the degree of corporal suffering inflicted. Report, of course, gave out the back knotty and livid. After scourging, he was made over, in his 25 *San Benito*,³ to his friends, if he had any (but commonly

¹ *I.e.* room of state.

² Extreme penalties.

³ The yellow robe worn by victims at an *auto-da-fé*; lit. "St. Benedict," from the cut of the Penitentine robe.

such poor runagates were friendless), or to his parish officer, who, to enhance the effect of the scene, had his station allotted to him on the outside of the hall gate.

These solemn pageantries were not played off so often
5 as to spoil the general mirth of the community. We had plenty of exercise and recreation *after* school hours ; and, for myself, I must confess, that I was never happier, than *in* them. The Upper and the Lower Grammar Schools were held in the same room ; and an imaginary line only
10 divided their bounds. Their character was as different as that of the inhabitants on the two sides of the Pyrenees. The Rev. James Boyer was the Upper Master ; but the Rev. Matthew Field presided over that portion of the apartment, of which I had the good fortune to be a mem-
15 ber. We lived a life as careless as birds. We talked and did just what we pleased, and nobody molested us. We carried an accidence,¹ or a grammar, for form ; but, for any trouble it gave us, we might take two years in getting through the verbs deponent, and another two in forget-
20 ting all that we had learned about them. There was now and then the formality of saying a lesson, but if you had not learned it, a brush across the shoulders (just enough to disturb a fly) was the sole remonstrance. Field never used the rod ; and in truth he wielded the cane with no
25 great goodwill—holding it “like a dancer.” It looked in his hands rather like an emblem than an instrument of authority ; and an emblem, too, he was ashamed of. He

¹ A small book containing the rudiments (formerly called accidences) of grammar.

was a good easy man, that did not care to ruffle his own peace, nor perhaps set any great consideration upon the value of juvenile time. He came among us, now and then, but often stayed away whole days from us ; and when he came, it made no difference to us — he had his private room to retire to, the short time he staid, to be out of the sound of our noise. Our mirth and uproar went on. We had classics of our own, without being beholden to “insolent Greece or haughty Rome,” that passed current among us — Peter Wilkins — The Adventures of the Hon. Captain Robert Boyle — The Fortunate Blue-coat Boy — and the like. Or we cultivated a turn for mechanic or scientific operations ; making little sun-dials of paper ; or weaving those ingenious parentheses, called *cat-cradles* ; or making dry peas to dance upon the end of a tin pipe ; or studying the art military over that laudable game “French and English,” and a hundred other such devices to pass away the time — mixing the useful with the agreeable — as would have made the souls of Rousseau and John Locke chuckle to have seen us.

Matthew Field belonged to that class of modest divines who affect to mix in equal proportion the *gentleman*, the *scholar*, and the *Christian* ; but, I know not how, the first ingredient is generally found to be the predominating dose in the composition. He was engaged in gay parties, or with his courtly bow at some episcopal levée, when he should have been attending upon us. He had for many years the classical charge of a hundred children, during the four or five first years of their education ; and his very

highest form¹ seldom proceeded further than two or three of the introductory fables of Phædrus. How things were suffered to go on thus, I cannot guess. Boyer, who was the proper person to have remedied these abuses, always affected, perhaps felt, a delicacy in interfering in a province not strictly his own. I have not been without my suspicions, that he was not altogether displeased at the contrast we presented to his end of the school. We were a sort of Helots to his young Spartans. He would sometimes, with ironic deference, send to borrow a rod of the Under Master, and then, with sardonic grin, observe to one of his upper boys, "how neat and fresh the twigs looked." While his pale students were battering their brains over Xenophon and Plato, with a silence as deep as that enjoyed by the Samite, we were enjoying ourselves at our ease in our little Goshen. We saw a little into the secrets of his discipline, and the prospect did but the more reconcile us to our lot. His thunders rolled innocuous for us; his storms came near, but never touched us; contrary to Gideon's miracle, while all around were drenched, our fleece was dry.² His boys turned out the better scholars; we, I suspect, have the advantage in temper. His pupils cannot speak of him without something of terror allaying their gratitude; the remembrance of Field comes back with all the soothing images of indolence, and summer slumbers, and work like play, and inno-

¹ Bench. The English term equivalent to our "grade" or "class."

² Cowley. [C. L.]

cent idleness, and Elysian exemptions, and life itself a "playing holiday."

Though sufficiently removed from the jurisdiction of Boyer, we were near enough (as I have said) to understand a little of his system. We occasionally heard sounds of the *Ululantes*,¹ and caught glances of Tartarus. B. was a rabid pedant. His English style was cramped to barbarism. His Easter anthems (for his duty obliged him to those periodical flights) were grating as scrannel² pipes.³ — He would laugh, ay, and heartily, but then it must be at Flaccus's quibble about *Rex*⁴ — or at the *tristis severitas in vultu*,⁵ or *inspicere in patinas*,⁶ of Terence — thin jests, which at their first broaching could hardly have had mo⁷ enough to move a Roman muscle. — He had two

¹ Howling ones. The idea is from Virgil, *Æneid*, vi. 557.

² Thin, squeaking. Milton's term, see *Paradise Lost*, 124.

³ In this and everything B. was the antipodes of his coadjutor. While the former was digging his brains for crude anthems, worth a pig-nut, F. would be revivifying his gentlemanly fancy in the more flowery walks of the Muses. A little dramatic effusion of his, under the name of Vertumnus and Pomona, is not yet forgotten by the chaperons of that sort of literature. It was accepted by Garrick, but the town did not give it their sanction. — B. used to say of it, in a way of half-compliment, half-irony, that it was *too classical for representation*. [C. L.]

⁴ In the original, the quibble turns on the double meaning of *rex* as a private surname, and *rex*, a king.

⁵ Partisan rigour in his countenance, — used by Terence, *And.* 5. 2. 16. to describe a hypocritical liar.

⁶ To look into stewpans, as in a mirror, — a counsel given to scolders.

⁷ Force, or point.

wigs, both pedantic, but of differing omen. The one serene, smiling, fresh powdered, betokening a mild day. The other, an old, discoloured, unkempt, angry caxon,¹ denoting frequent and bloody execution. Woe to the
 5 school, when he made his morning appearance in his *passy* or *passionate wig*. No comet expounded surer.— J. B. had a heavy hand. I have known him double his knotty fist at a poor trembling child (the maternal milk hardly dry upon its lips) with a “Sirrah, do you presume
 10 to set your wits at me ?” — Nothing was more common than to see him make a headlong entry into the school-room, from his inner recess, or library, and, with turbulent eye, singling out a lad, roar out, “Od’s my life, Sirrah,” (his favourite adjuration) “I have a great mind to whip
 15 you,”— then, with as sudden a retracting impulse, fling back into his lair — and, after a cooling lapse of some minutes (during which all but the culprit had totally forgotten the context) drive headlong out again, piecing out his imperfect sense, as if it had been some Devil’s Litany, with
 20 the expletory yell — “*and I WILL, too.*” — In his gentler moods, when the *rabidus furor*² was assuaged, he had resort to an ingenious method, peculiar, for what I have heard, to himself, of whipping the boy, and reading the Debates,³ at the same time ; a paragraph, and a lash between ; which in those times, when parliamentary oratory
 25 was most at a height and flourishing in these realms, was

¹ An old cant term for a wig; origin unknown.

² Rabid rage. Probably from Catullus 63. 38.

³ That is, the reports of speeches in Parliament.

not calculated to impress the patient with a veneration for the diffuser graces of rhetoric.

Once, and but once, the uplifted rod was known to fall ineffectual from his hand — when droll-squinting W——¹ having been caught putting the inside of the master's desk to a use for which the architect had clearly not designed it, to justify himself, with great simplicity averred, that *he did not know that the thing had been forewarned*. This exquisite irrecognition of any law antecedent to the *oral* or *declaratory*, struck so irresistibly upon the fancy¹⁰ of all who heard it (the pedagogue himself not excepted) that remission was unavoidable.

L. has given credit to B.'s great merits as an instructor. Coleridge, in his literary life, has pronounced a more intelligible and ample encomium on them. The author of¹⁵ the *Country Spectator* doubts not to compare him with the ablest teachers of antiquity. Perhaps we cannot dismiss him better than with the pious ejaculation of C.² — when he heard that his old master was on his death-bed — “Poor J. B. ! — may all his faults be forgiven ; and²⁰ may he be wafted to bliss by little cherub boys, all head and wings, with no *bottoms* to reproach his sublunary infirmities.”

Under him were many good and sound scholars bred. — First Grecian of my time was Lancelot Pepys Stevens,²⁵ kindest of boys and men, since co-grammar master (and inseparable companion) with Dr. T——e.³ What an

¹ Not identifiable. ² That is, Coleridge.

³ Arthur William Trollope (1768-1827).

edifying spectacle did this brace of friends present to those who remembered the anti-socialities of their predecessors!—You never met the one by chance in the street without a wonder, which was quickly dissipated by the almost immediate sub-appearance of the other. Generally arm-in-arm, these kindly coadjutors lightened for each other the toilsome duties of their profession, and when, in advanced age, one found it convenient to retire, the other was not long in discovering that it suited him to lay down the fasces¹ also. Oh, it is pleasant, as it is rare, to find the same arm linked in yours at forty, which at thirteen helped it to turn over the *Cicero De Amicitia* or some tale of Antique Friendship, which the young heart even then was burning to anticipate!—Co-Grecian with S. was Th——,² who has since executed with ability various diplomatic functions at the Northern Courts. Th—— was a tall, dark, saturnine youth, sparing of speech, with raven locks.—Thomas Fanshaw Middleton followed him (now Bishop of Calcutta), a scholar and a gentleman in his teens. He has the reputation of an excellent critic; and is author (besides the *Country Spectator*) of a treatise on the Greek Article, against Sharpe.—M. is said to bear his mitre high in India, where the *regni novitas*³ (I dare say) sufficiently justifies the bear-

¹ Here the birch rod. The word designates the bundle of rods, carried by the lictor before a Roman magistrate.

² Sir Edward Thornton (1766–1852), a diplomatist.

³ Novelty of dominion; an allusion to his being the *first* Bishop of Calcutta. The phrase from Virgil, *Æneid*, i. 563.

ing. A humility quite as primitive as that of Jewel or Hooker might not be exactly fitted to impress the minds of those Anglo-Asiatic diocesans with a reverence for home institutions, and the church which those fathers watered. The manners of M. at school, though firm, 5 were mild, and unassuming. — Next to M. (if not senior to him) was Richards, author of the *Aboriginal Britons*, the most spirited of the Oxford Prize Poems; a pale, studious Grecian. — Then followed poor S——, ill-fated M—— !¹ of these the Muse is silent. 10

Finding some of Edward's race
Unhappy, pass their annals by.

Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the day-spring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee — the dark pillar not yet turned — Samuel Taylor 15 Coleridge — Logician, Metaphysician, Bard ! — How have I seen the casual passer through the Cloisters stand still, entranced with admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the *speech* and the *garb* of the young Mirandula), to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet 20 intonations, the mysteries of Jamblichus, or Plotinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar — while the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity-boy* ! — Many were 25 the “wit-combats,” (to dally awhile with the words of old

¹ Of these the *Kzy* says, “Scott, died in Bedlam,” and “Maunde, dismiss'd school.”

Fuller,) between him and C. V. Le G——,¹ "which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon, and an English man-of-war; Master Coleridge, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid, but slow in his performances. C. V. L., with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention."

Nor shalt thou, their compeer, be quickly forgotten,
 10 Allen, with the cordial smile, and still more cordial laugh, with which thou wert wont to make the old Cloisters shake, in thy cognition² of some poignant jest of theirs; or the anticipation of some more material, and, peradventure, practical one, of thine own. Extinct are those smiles,
 15 with that beautiful countenance, with which (for thou wert the *Nireus formosus*³ of the school), in the days of thy maturer waggery, thou didst disarm the wrath of infuriated town-damsel, who, incensed by provoking pinch, turning tigress-like round, suddenly converted
 20 by thy angel look, exchanged the half-formed terrible "bl——,"⁴ for a gentler greeting—"bless thy handsome face!"

Next follow two, who ought to be now alive, and the

¹ Charles Valentine Le Grice (1773-1858). An anecdote is related of him in the essay *Grace before Meat*, p. 136.

² *I.e.* appreciation. One of Lamb's quaintnesses in the use of words.

³ Handsome Nireus; Homer, *Iliad*, ii. 673, Latinized.

⁴ Perhaps she started to say "blast."

friends of Elia — the junior Le G——¹ and F——²; who impelled, the former by a roving temper, the latter by too quick a sense of neglect — all capable of enduring the slights poor Sizars are sometimes subject to in our seats of learning — exchanged their Alma Mater for the camp; 5 perishing, one by climate, and one on the plains of Salamanca: — Le G——, sanguine, volatile, sweet-natured; F—— dogged, faithful, anticipative of insult, warm-hearted, with something of the old Roman height about him. 10

Fine, frank-hearted Fr——,³ the present master of Hertford, with Marmaduke T——,⁴ mildest of Missionaries — and both my good friends still — close the catalogue of Grecians in my time.

¹ Samuel Le Grice, who became a soldier and died in the West Indies.

² Joseph Favell, afterwards Captain, and killed at Salamanca, in the Peninsula. In the essay on *Poor Relations* he figures as "W", see p. 91.

³ Frederick William Franklin, afterwards Master of one branch of the school.

⁴ Marmaduke Thompson, to whom Lamb dedicated *Rossmund Gray*.

MACKERY END, IN HERTFORDSHIRE

BRIDGET ELIA has been my housekeeper for many a long year. I have obligations to Bridget, extending beyond the period of memory. We house together, ^{old} ~~old~~ bachelor and maid, in a sort of double singleness;¹ with such tolerable comfort, upon the whole, that I, for one, find in myself no sort of disposition to go out upon the mountains, with the rash king's offspring, to bewail my celibacy. We agree pretty well in our tastes and habits—yet so, as “with a difference.” We are generally in harmony, with occasional bickerings—as it should be among near relations. Our sympathies are rather understood, than expressed; and once, upon my dissembling a tone in my voice more kind than ordinary, my cousin burst into tears, and complained that I was altered. We are both great readers in different directions. While I am hanging over (for the thousandth time) some passage in old Burton, or one of his strange contemporaries, she is abstracted in some modern tale, or adventure, whereof our common reading-table is daily fed with assiduously fresh supplies. Narrative teases me. I have little concern in the progress of events. She must have a story—well, ill, or indifferently told—so there be life stirring in it, and

¹ A play on the familiar phrase “double blessedness,” used of marriage.

plenty of good or evil accidents.¹ [The fluctuations of fortune in fiction — and almost in real life — have ceased to interest, or operate but dully upon me. Out-of-the-way humours and opinions — heads with some diverting twist in them — the oddities of authorship please me most. My cousin has a native disrelish of anything that sounds odd or bizarre. Nothing goes down with her, that is quaint, irregular, or out of the road of common sympathy. She “holds Nature more clever.”] I can pardon her blindness to the beautiful obliquities of the *Religio Medici*; but she must apologize to me for certain disrespectful insinuations, which she has been pleased to throw out latterly, touching the intellectuals² of a dear favourite of mine, of the last century but one — the thrice noble, chaste, and virtuous, — but again somewhat *fantastical*, and original-brain’d, generous Margaret Newcastle.

It has been the lot of my cousin, oftener perhaps than I could have wished, to have had for her associates and mine, free-thinkers — leaders, and disciples, of novel philosophies and systems; but she neither wrangles with, nor accepts, their opinions. That which was good and venerable to her, when a child, retains its authority over her mind still. She never juggles or plays tricks with her understanding.

We are both of us inclined to be a little too positive; and I have observed the result of our disputes to be almost uniformly this — that in matters of fact, dates,

¹ An older use of the word, meaning nearly the same as incidents.

² A self-explaining quaintness of Lamb’s, perhaps from an old-fashioned usage; we should now say good sense.

and circumstances, it turns out, that I was in the right, and my cousin in the wrong. But where we have differed upon moral points ; upon something proper to be done, or let alone ; whatever heat of opposition, or steadiness of conviction, I set out with, I am sure always, in the long run, to be brought over to her way of thinking.

I must touch upon the foibles of my kinswoman with a gentle hand, for Bridget does not like to be told of her faults. She hath¹ an awkward trick (to say no worse of it) of reading in company : at which times she will answer *yes* or *no* to a question, without fully understanding its purport—which is provoking, and derogatory in the highest degree to the dignity of the putter of the said question. Her presence of mind is equal to the most pressing trials of life, but will sometimes desert her upon trifling occasions. When the purpose requires it, and is a thing of moment, she can speak to it greatly ; but in matters which are not stuff of the conscience, she hath been known sometimes to let slip a word less seasonably.

Her education in youth was not much attended to ; and she happily missed all that train of female garniture, which passeth by the name of accomplishments. She was tumbled early, by accident or design, into a spacious closet of good old English reading, without much selection or

¹ It suited Lamb's taste for the older forms of style occasionally to use the older form of the verb. Doubtless he had in mind an effect to produce by it ; in this and the next two paragraphs he seems to use it half-playfully, as helping to soften a little the gentle spirit of blame in which he speaks.

prohibition, and browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage. Had I twenty girls, they should be brought up exactly in this fashion. I know not whether their chance in wedlock might not be diminished by it; but I can answer for it, that it makes (if the worst come 5 to the worst) most incomparable old maids.

In a season of distress, she is the truest comforter; but in the teasing accidents,¹ and minor perplexities, which do not call out the *will* to meet them, she sometimes maketh matters worse by an excess of participation. If 10 she does not always divide your trouble, upon the pleasanter occasions of life she is sure always to treble your satisfaction. She is excellent to be at a play with, or upon a visit; but best, when she goes a journey with you.

We made an excursion together a few summers since, 15 into Hertfordshire, to beat up the quarters of some of our less-known relations in that fine corn² country.

The oldest thing I remember is Mackery End; or Mackarel End, as it is spelt, perhaps more properly, in some old maps of Hertfordshire; a farm-house, — de- 20 lightfully situated within a gentle walk from Wheathampstead. I can just remember having been there, on a visit to a great-aunt, when I was a child, under the care of Bridget; who, as I have said, is older than myself by some ten years. I wish that I could throw into a heap 25 the remainder of our joint existences, that we might share them in equal division. But that is impossible. The

¹ See p. 43, note 1.

² We should say wheat country in America.

house was at that time in the occupation of a substantial yeoman, who had married my grandmother's sister. His name was Gladman. My grandmother was a Bruton, married to a Field. The Gladmans and the Brutons are still flourishing in that part of the county, but the Fields are almost extinct. More than forty years had elapsed since the visit I speak of; and, for the greater portion of that period, we had lost sight of the other two branches also. Who or what sort of persons inherited Mackery End — kindred or strange folk — we were afraid almost to conjecture, but determined some day to explore.

By somewhat a circuitous route, taking the noble park at Luton in our way from St. Albans, we arrived at the spot of our anxious curiosity about noon. The sight of the old farm-house, though every trace of it was effaced from my recollection, affected me with a pleasure which I had not experienced for many a year. For though I had forgotten it, ~~we~~ we had never forgotten being there together, and we had been talking about Mackery End all our lives, till memory on my part became mocked with a phantom of itself, and I thought I knew the aspect of a place, which, when present, O how unlike it was to *that*, which I had conjured up so many times instead of it!

Still the air I breathed balmily about it; the season was in the "heart of June," and I could say with the poet,

But there, that ^{old} tale appear so fair
To find imagination,
Dost rival in the light of day
Her delicate creation!

Bridget's was more a waking bliss than mine, for she easily remembered her old acquaintance again — some altered features, of course, a little grudged at. At first, indeed, she was ready to disbelieve for joy; but the scene soon reconfirmed itself in her affections — and she traversed every outpost of the old mansion, to the wood-house, the orchard, the place where the pigeon-house had stood (house and birds were alike flown) — with a breathless impatience of recognition, which was more pardonable perhaps than decorous at the age of fifty odd. 10 But Bridget in some things is behind her years.

The only thing left was to get into the house — and that was a difficulty which to me singly would have been insurmountable; for I am terribly shy in making myself known to strangers and out-of-date kinsfolk. Love, stronger than 15 scruple, winged my cousin in without me: but she soon returned with a creature that might have sat to a sculptor for the image of Welcome. It was the youngest of the Gladmans; who, by marriage with a Bruton, had become mistress of the old mansion. A comely brood are the Bru- 20 tons. Six of them, females, were noted as the handsomest young women in the county. But this adopted Bruton, in my mind, was better than they all — more comely. She was born too late to have remembered me. She just recollected in early life to have had her cousin Bridget once pointed 25 out to her, climbing a stile. But the name of kindred, and of cousinship, was enough. Those slender ties, that prove slight as gossamer in the rending atmosphere of a metropolis, bind faster, as we found it, in hearty, homely,

loving Hertfordshire. In five minutes we were as thoroughly acquainted as if we had been born and bred up together; were familiar, even to the calling each other by our Christian names. So Christians should call one another. To have seen Bridget, and her — it was like the meeting of the two scriptural cousins! There was a grace and dignity, an amplitude of form and stature, answering to her mind, in this farmer's wife, which would have shined¹ in a palace — or so we thought it. We were made welcome by husband and wife equally — we, and our friend that was with us — I had almost forgotten him — but B. F. will not so soon forget that meeting, if peradventure he shall read this on the far distant shores where the Kangaroo haunts. The fatted calf was made ready, or rather was already so, as if in anticipation of our coming; and, after an appropriate glass of native wine, never let me forget with what honest pride this hospitable cousin made us proceed to Wheathampstead, to introduce us (as some new-found rarity) to her mother and sister Gladmans, who did indeed know something more of us, at a time when she almost knew nothing. — With what corresponding kindness we were received by them also — how Bridget's memory, exalted by the occasion, warmed into a thousand half-obliterated recollections of things and persons, to my utter astonishment, and her own — and to the astoundment of B. F. who sat by, almost the only thing that was not a cousin there, — old effaced images of more than half-forgotten names and circumstances still crowd-

¹ Lamb uses this obsolete form by preference.

ing back upon her, as words written in lemon come out upon exposure to a friendly warmth, — when I forget all this, then may my country cousins forget me ; and Bridget no more remember, that in the days of weakling infancy I was her tender charge — as I have been her care in foolish manhood since — in those pretty pastoral walks, long ago, about Mackery End, in Hertfordshire.

MY FIRST PLAY

At the north end of Cross Court there yet stands a portal, of some architectural pretensions, though reduced to humble use, serving at present for an entrance to a printing-office. This old doorway, if you are young, Reader, you may not know was the identical pit entrance to old Drury—Garrick's Drury—all of it that is left. I never pass it without shaking some forty years from off my shoulders, recurring to the evening when I passed through it to see *my first play*. The afternoon had been wet, and the condition of our going (the elder folks and myself) was, that the rain should cease. With what a beating heart did I watch from the window the puddles, from the stillness of which I was taught to prognosticate the desired cessation! I seem to remember the last spurt, and the glee with which I ran to announce it.

We went with orders, which my godfather F. had sent us. He kept the oil shop (now Davies's) at the corner of Featherstone Building, in Holborn. F. was a tall grave person, lofty in speech, and had pretensions above his rank. He associated in those days with John Palmer, the comedian, whose gait and bearing he seemed to copy; if John (which is quite as likely) did not rather borrow somewhat of his manner from my godfather. He was also known to, and visited by, Sheridan. It was to his

house in Holborn that young Brinsley brought his first wife on her elopement with him from a boarding-school at Bath — the beautiful Maria Linley. My parents were present (over a quadrille table) when he arrived in the evening with his harmonious¹ charge. — From either of these connexions it may be inferred that my godfather could command an order for the then Drury Lane Theatre at pleasure — and, indeed, a pretty liberal issue of those cheap billets, in Brinsley's easy autograph, I have heard him say was the sole remuneration which he had received¹⁰ for many years' nightly illumination of the orchestra and various avenues of that theatre — and he was content it should be so. The honour of Sheridan's familiarity — or supposed familiarity — was better to my godfather than money.

15

F. was the most gentlemanly of oilmen ; grandiloquent, yet courteous. His delivery of the commonest matters of fact was Ciceronian. He had two Latin words almost constantly in his mouth (how odd sounds Latin from an oilman's lips !), which my better knowledge since has²⁰ enabled me to correct. In strict pronunciation they should have been sounded *vice versa* — but in those young years they impressed me with more awe than they would now do, read aright from Seneca or Varro — in his own peculiar pronunciation, monosyllabically elaborated, or²⁵ Anglicised, into something like *verse verse*. By an imposing manner, and the help of these distorted syllables,

¹ This word is Lamb's allusive way of intimating that the lady was a singer.

he climbed (but that was little) to the highest parochial honours which St. Andrew's has to bestow.

He is dead — and thus much I thought due to his memory, both for my first orders¹ (little wondrous talismans! — slight keys, and insignificant to outward sight, but opening to me more than Arabian paradises!) and moreover, that by his testamentary beneficence I came into possession of the only landed property which I could ever call my own — situate near the roadway village of
 10 pleasant Puckeridge, in Hertfordshire. When I journeyed down to take possession, and planted foot on my own ground, the stately habits of the donor descended upon me, and I strode (shall I confess the vanity?) with larger paces over my allotment of three quarters of an
 15 acre, with its commodious mansion in the midst, with the feeling of an English freeholder that all betwixt sky and centre² was my own. The estate has passed into more prudent hands, and nothing but an agrarian³ can restore it.

In those days were pit orders. Beshrew⁴ the uncomfortable manager who abolished them! — with one of these we went. I remember the waiting at the door — not that which is left — but between that and an inner door in shelter — O when shall I be such an expectant again! —

¹ That is, theatre tickets; the significance of which, to a child, is enlarged on in the parenthesis.

² That is, centre of the earth.

³ That is, one who favours, or who could bring about, a legal change in the tenure of land; the word is used of agitators for an equable distribution of property.

⁴ An old-fashioned, here meant to be half-playful, imprecation.

with the cry of nonpareils,¹ an indispensable playhouse accompaniment in those days. As near as I can recollect, the fashionable pronunciation of the theatrical fruit-cresses then was, "Chase some oranges, chase some nonpareils, chase a bill of the play;" — chase *pro* chuse.² But when we got in, and I beheld the green curtain that veiled a heaven to my imagination, which was soon to be disclosed — the breathless anticipations I endured! I had seen something like it in the plate prefixed to *Troilus and Cressida*, in Rowe's *Shakespeare* — the tent scene with Diomedes — and a sight of that plate can always bring back in a measure the feeling of that evening. — The boxes at that time, full of well-dressed women of quality, projected over the pit; and the pilasters reaching down were adorned with a glistening substance (I know not what) under glass (as it seemed), resembling — a homely fancy — but I judged it to be sugar-candy — yet, to my raised imagination, divested of its homelier qualities, it appeared a glorified candy! — The orchestra lights at length arose, those "fair Auroras!" Once the bell sounded. It was to ring out yet once again — and, incapable of the anticipation, I reposed my shut eyes in a sort of resignation upon the maternal lap. It rang the second time. The curtain drew up — I was not past six years old — and the play was *Artaxerxes*!

¹ Apparently some fruit or sweetmeat.

² An older spelling for *chute*, which Lamb retains partly because it is old, partly perhaps because in this form it is less different from *chute*.

I had dabbled a little in the Universal History — the ancient part of it — and here was the court of Persia. It was being admitted to a sight of the past. I took no proper interest in the action going on, for I understood not its import — but I heard the word Darius, and I was in the midst of Daniel.¹ All feeling was absorbed in vision. Gorgeous vests, gardens, palaces, princesses, passed before me. I knew not players. I was in Persepolis for the time; and the burning idol of their devotion almost converted me into a worshipper. I was awe-struck, and believed those significations to be something more than elemental fires. It was all enchantment and a dream. No such pleasure has since visited me but in dreams. — Harlequin's Invasion followed; where, I remember, the transformation of the magistrates into reverend beldams seemed to me a piece of grave historic justice, and the tailor carrying his own head to be as sober a verity as the legend of St. Denys.

The next play to which I was taken was the Lady of the Manor, of which, with the exception of some scenery, very faint traces are left in my memory. It was followed by a pantomime, called Lun's Ghost — a satiric touch. I apprehend, upon Rich, not long since dead — but to my apprehension (too sincere for satire), Lun was as remote a piece of antiquity as Lud — the father of a line of Harlequins — transmitting his dagger of lath (the wooden scap-

¹ I.e. the *Book of Daniel*, in which Darius is a personage, and there are gorgeous scenes of the ancient Persian court.

² Vests, that is, vestments. See also (in singular) p. 55. l. 2.

tre) through countless ages. I saw the primeval Motley come from his silent tomb in a ghastly vest of white patchwork, like the apparition of a dead rainbow. So Harlequins (thought I) look when they are dead.

My third play followed in quick succession. It was *The Way of the World*. I think I must have sat at it as grave as a judge; for, I remember, the hysteric affectations of good Lady Wishfort affected me like some solemn tragic passion. *Robinson Crusoe* followed; in which *Crusoe*, man Friday, and the parrot, were as good and authentic as in the story. — The clownery and pantaloony of these pantomimes have clean passed out of my head. I believe, I no more laughed at them, than at the same age I should have been disposed to laugh at the grotesque Gothic heads (seeming to me then replete with devout meaning) that gape, and grin, in stone around the inside of the old Round Church (my church) of the Templars.

I saw these plays in the season 1781-2, when I was from six to seven years old. After the intervention of six or seven other years (for at school all play-going was inhibited) I again entered the doors of a theatre. That old *Artaxerxes* evening had never done ringing in my fancy. I expected the same feelings to come again with the same occasion. But we differ from ourselves less at sixty and sixteen, than the latter does from six. In that interval what had I not lost! At the first period I knew nothing, understood nothing, discriminated nothing. I felt all, loved all, wondered all —

Was nourished, I could not tell how —

I had left the temple a devotee, and was returned a rationalist. The same things were there materially ; but the emblem, the reference, was gone ! — The green curtain was no longer a veil, drawn between two worlds, the unfolding of which was to bring back past ages, to present a "royal ghost," — but a certain quantity of green baize, which was to separate the audience for a given time from certain of their fellow-men who were to come forward and pretend those parts. The lights — the orchestra lights —
10 came up a clumsy machinery. The first ring, and the second ring, was now but a trick of the prompter's bell — which had been, like the note of the cuckoo, a phantom of a voice, no hand seen or guessed at which ministered to its warning. The actors were men and women painted.
15 I thought the fault was in them ; but it was in myself, and the alteration which those many centuries — of six short twelvemonths — had wrought in me. — Perhaps it was fortunate for me that the play of the evening was but an indifferent comedy, as it gave me time to crop some
20 unreasonable expectations, which might have interfered with the genuine emotions with which I was soon after enabled to enter upon the first appearance to me of Mrs. Siddons in *Isabella*. Comparison and retrospection soon yielded to the present attraction of the scene ; and the
25 theatre became to me, upon a new stock, the most delightful of recreations.

BARBARA S—

ON the noon of the 14th of November, 1743 or 4, I forget which it was, just as the clock had struck one, Barbara S—, with her accustomed punctuality ascended the long rambling staircase, with awkward interposed landing-places, which led to the office, or rather a sort of box with a desk in it, whereat sat the then Treasurer of (what few of our readers may remember) the old Bath Theatre. All over the island it was the custom, and remains so I believe to this day, for the players to receive their weekly stipend on the Saturday. It was not much 10 that Barbara had to claim.

This little maid had just entered her eleventh year; but her important station at the theatre, as it seemed to her, with the benefits which she felt to accrue from her pious application of her small earnings, had given an air 15 of womanhood to her steps and to her behaviour. You would have taken her to have been at least five years older.

Till latterly she had merely been employed in choruses, or where children were wanted to fill up the scene. But 20 the manager, observing a diligence and adroitness in her above her age, had for some few months past entrusted to her the performance of whole parts. You may guess the self-consequence of the promoted Barbara. She had already drawn tears in young Arthur; had rallied Richard 25 with infantine petulance in the Duke of York; and in her

turn had rebuked that petulance when she was Prince of Wales. She would have done the elder child in Morton's pathetic afterpiece to the life; but as yet the Children in the Wood was not.

5 Long after this little girl was grown an aged woman, I have seen some of these small parts, each making two or three pages at most, copied out in the rudest hand of the then prompter, who doubtless transcribed a little more carefully and fairly for the grown-up tragedy ladies of the
10 establishment. But such as they were, blotted and scrawled, as for a child's use, she kept them all; and in the zenith of her after reputation it was a delightful sight to behold them bound up in costliest Morocco, each single — each small part making a *book* — with fine clasps,
15 gilt-splashed, &c. She had conscientiously kept them as they had been delivered to her; not a blot had been effaced or tampered with. They were precious to her for their affecting remembrancings. They were her *principia*,¹ her rudiments; the elementary atoms; the little
20 steps by which she pressed forward to perfection. "What," she would say, "could Indian rubber, or a pumice-stone, have done for these darlings?"

I am in no hurry to begin my story — indeed I have little or none to tell — so I will just mention an observa-
25 tion of hers connected with that interesting time.

Not long before she died I had been discoursing with

¹ This term, which the next phrase defines, used to be applied to books containing the elements of a study, such as were put into the hands of young learners.

her on the quantity of real present emotion which a great tragic performer experiences during acting. I ventured to think, that though in the first instance such players must have possessed the feelings which they so powerfully called up in others, yet by frequent repetition those feelings must become deadened in great measure, and the performer trust to the memory of past emotion, rather than express a present one. She indignantly repelled the notion, that with a truly great tragedian the operation, by which such effects were produced upon an audience, could ever degrade itself into what was purely mechanical. With much delicacy, availing to instance in her *self*-experience, she told me, that so long ago as when she used to play the part of the Little Son to Mrs. Porter's Isabella, (I think it was) when that impressive actress has been bending over her in some heart-rending colloquy, she has felt real hot tears come trickling from her, which (to use her powerful expression) have perfectly scalded her back.

I am not quite so sure that it was Mrs. Porter; but it was some great actress of that day. The name is indifferent; but the fact of the scalding tears I most distinctly remember.

I was always fond of the society of players, and am not sure that an impediment in my speech (which certainly kept me out of the pulpit) even more than certain personal disqualifications, which are often got over in that profession, did not prevent me at one time of life from adopting it. I have had the honour (I must ever call it)

once to have been admitted to the tea-table of Miss Kelly. I have played at serious whist with Mr. Liston. I have chatted with ever good-humoured Mrs. Charles Kemble. I have conversed as friend to friend with her
5 accomplished husband. I have been indulged with a classical conference with Macready ; and with a sight of the Player-picture gallery, at Mr. Matthews's, when the kind owner, to remunerate me for my love of the old actors (whom he loves so much) went over it with me,
10 supplying to his capital collection, what alone the artist could not give them—voice ; and their living motion. Old tones, half-faded, of Dodd and Parsons, and Baddé-ley, have lived again for me at his bidding. Only Edwin he could not restore to me. I have supped with —— ;
15 but I am growing a coxcomb.

As I was about to say — at the desk of the then treasurer of the old Bath Theatre — not Diamond's — presented herself the little Barbara S——.

The parents of Barbara had been in reputable circum-
20 stances. The father had practised, I believe, as an apothecary in the town. But his practice from causes which I feel my own infirmity too sensibly that way to arraign — or perhaps from that pure infelicity which ac-
companies some people in their walk through life, and
25 which it is impossible to lay at the door of imprudence — was now reduced to nothing. They were in fact in the very teeth of starvation, when the manager, who knew and respected them in better days, took the little Bar-
bara into his company.

At the period I commenced with, her slender earnings were the sole support of the family, including two younger sisters. I must throw a veil over some mortifying circumstances: Enough to say, that her Saturday's pittance was the only chance of a Sunday's (generally their only) meal of meat.

One thing I will only mention, that in some child's part, where in her theatrical character she was to sup off a roast fowl (O joy to Barbara!) some comic actor, who was for the night caterer for this dainty—in the misguided humour of his part, threw over the dish such a quantity of salt (O grief and pain of heart to Barbara!) that when he crammed a portion of it into her mouth, she was obliged splutteringly to reject it; and what with shame of her ill-acted part, and pain of real appetite at missing such a dainty, her little heart solibed almost to breaking, till a flood of tears, which the well-fed spectators were totally unable to comprehend, mercifully relieved her.

This was the little starved, meritorious maid, who stood before old Ravenscroft, the treasurer, for her Saturday's payment.

Ravenscroft was a man, I have heard many old theatrical people besides herself say, of all men least calculated for a treasurer. He had no head for accounts, paid away at random, kept scarce any books, and summing-up at the week's end, if he found himself a pound or so deficient, blessed himself that it was no worse.

Now Barbara's weekly stipend was a bare half-guinea—By mistake he popped into her hand a—whole one.

Barbara tripped away.

She was entirely unconscious at first of the mistake : God knows, Ravenscroft would never have discovered it.

But when she had got down to the first of those uncouth landing-places, she became sensible of an unusual weight of metal pressing her little hand.

Now mark the dilemma.¹

She was by nature a good child. From her parents and those about her she had imbibed no contrary influence. But then they had taught her nothing. Poor men's smoky cabins are not always porticoes of moral philosophy. This little maid had no instinct to evil, but then she might be said to have no fixed principle. She had heard honesty commended, but never dreamed of its application to herself. She thought of it as something which concerned grown-up people — men and women. She had never known temptation, or thought of preparing resistance against it.

Her first impulse was to go back to the old treasurer, and explain to him his blunder. He was already so confused with age, besides a natural want of punctuality, that she would have had some difficulty in making him understand it. She saw *that* in an instant. And then it was such a bit of money ! and then the image of a larger allowance of butcher's meat on their table next day came across her, till her little eyes glistened, and her mouth moistened. But then Mr. Ravenscroft had always

¹ A perplexity, which, however, it is decided, produces a result in some way bad or undesirable.

been so good-natured, had stood her friend behind the scenes, and even recommended her promotion to some of her little parts. But again the old man was reputed to be worth a world of money. He was supposed to have fifty pounds a year clear of the theatre. And then came staring upon her the figures of her little stockingless and shoeless sisters. And when she looked at her own neat white cotton stockings, which her situation at the theatre had made it indispensable for her mother to provide for her, with hard straining and pinching from the family stock, and thought how glad she should be to cover their poor feet with the same — and how then they could accompany her to rehearsals, which they had hitherto been precluded from doing, by reason of their unfashionable attire — in these thoughts she reached the second landing-place — the second, I mean from the top — for there was still another left to traverse.

Now virtue support Barbara!

And that never-failing friend *did* step in — for at that moment a strength not her own, I have heard her say, was revealed to her — a reason above reasoning — and without her own agency, as it seemed (for she never felt her feet to move) she found herself transported back to the individual desk she had just quitted, and her hand in the old hand of Ravenscroft, who in silence took back the refunded treasure, and who had been sitting (good man) insensible to the lapse of minutes, which to her were anxious ages; and from that moment a deep peace fell upon her heart, and she knew the quality of honesty.

A year or two's unremitting application to her profession brightened up the feet, and the prospects, of her little sisters, set the whole family upon their legs again, and released her from the difficulty of discussing moral dogmas upon a landing-place.

I have heard her say, that it was a surprise, not much short of mortification to her, to see the coolness with which the old man pocketed the difference, which had caused her such mortal throes.

- 10 This anecdote of herself I had in the year 1800, from the mouth of the late Mrs. Crawford,¹ then sixty-seven years of age (she died soon after); and to her struggles upon this childish occasion I have sometimes ventured to think her indebted for that power of rending the heart
15 in the representation of conflicting emotions, for which in after years she was considered as little inferior (if at all so in the part of Lady Randolph) even to Mrs. Siddons.

¹ The maiden name of this lady was Street, which she changed, by successive marriages, for those of Dancer, Barry, and Crawford. She was Mrs. Crawford, and a third time a widow, when I knew her. [C. L.]

THE SOUTH-SEA HOUSE

READER, in thy passage from the Bank—where thou hast been receiving thy half-yearly dividends (supposing thou art a lean amovant like myself)—to the Flower Pot, to secure a place for Dalston, or Shacklewell, or some other thy suburban retreat northerly,—didst thou never observe a melancholy looking, handsome, brick and stone edifice, to the left—where Threadneedle Street abuts upon Bishopsgate? I dare say thou hast often admired its magnificent portals ever gaping wide, and disclosing to view a grave court, with cloisters and pillars, &c. with few or no traces of goers-in or comers-out—a desolation something like Balclutha's.¹

This was once a house of trade,—a centre of busy interests. The throng of merchants was here—the quick pulse of gain—and here some forms of business are still kept up, though the soul be long since fled. Here are still to be seen stately porticoes; imposing staircases; offices roomy as the state apartments in palaces—deserted, or thinly peopled with a few straggling clerks; the still more sacred interiors of court and committee rooms, with venerable faces of headles, door-keepers—directors seated in form on solemn days (to proclaim a dead dividend,) at long worm-eaten tables, that have been mahogany, with tarnished gilt-leather

¹ I passed by the walls of Balclutha, and they were desolate.—*Quintus*. [C. 1.]

coverings, supporting massy silver inkstands long since dry ; — the oaken wainscots hung with pictures of deceased governors and sub-governors, of Queen Anne, and the two first monarchs of the Brunswick dynasty ; — huge
 5 charts, which subsequent discoveries have antiquated ; — dusty maps of Mexico, dim as dreams, — and soundings of the Bay of Panama ! — The long passages hung with buckets, appended, in idle row, to walls, whose substance might defy any, short of the last, conflagration : — with vast
 10 ranges of cellarage under all, where dollars and pieces of eight once lay, an “unsunned heap,” for Mammon to have solaced his solitary heart withal, — long since dissipated, or scattered into air at the blast of the breaking of that famous BUBBLE. —

15 Such is the SOUTH-SEA HOUSE. At least, such it was forty years ago, when I knew it, — a magnificent relic ! What alterations may have been made in it since, I have had no opportunities of verifying. Time, I take for granted, has not freshened it. No wind has resuscitated
 20 the face of the sleeping waters. A thicker crust by this time stagnates upon it. The moths, that were then battenning upon its obsolete ledgers and daybooks, have rested from their depredations, but other light generations have succeeded, making fine fretwork among their
 25 single and double entries. Lavers of dust have accumulated (a superfoetation¹ of dirt !) upon the old layers,

¹ An instance of a usage, later much cultivated by such writers as Emerson and Holmes, of taking a scientific or technical term and applying it, like a figure, to an ordinary subject ; here, accord-

that seldom used to be disturbed, save by some curious finger, now and then, inquisitive to explore the mode of book-keeping in Queen Anne's reign ; or, with less hallowed curiosity, seeking to unveil some of the mysteries of that tremendous HOAX, whose extent the petty peculators of our day look back upon with the same expression of incredulous admiration, and hopeless ambition of rivalry, as would become the puny face of modern conspiracy contemplating the Titan size of Vaux's¹ super-human plot.

10

Peace to the manes of the BUBBLE ! Silence and destitution are upon thy walls, proud house, for a memorial !

Situated as thou art, in the very heart of stirring and living commerce, — amid the fret and fever of speculation — with the Bank, and the 'Change, and the India House about thee, in the hey-day of present prosperity, with their important faces, as it were, insulting thee, their *poor neighbour out of business* — to the idle and merely contemplative, — to such as me, old house ! there is a charm in thy quiet : — a cessation — a coolness from business — an indolence almost cloistral — which is delightful ! With what reverence have I paced thy great bare rooms and courts at eventide ! They spoke of the past : — the shade of some dead accountant, with visionary pen in ear, would flit by me, stiff as in life. Living accounts and accountants puzzle me. I have no skill in figuring. But thy great dead tomes, which scarce three degenerate clerks
 ing to Lamb's quaintness of sentiment, used somewhat whimsically or playfully.

¹ Guy Fawkes.

of the present day could lift from their enshrining shelves — with their old fantastic flourishes, and decorative rubric interlacings — their sums in triple columniations,¹ set down with formal superfluity of ciphers — with pious sentences
5 at the beginning, without which our religious ancestors never ventured to open a book of business, or bill of lading — the costly vellum covers of some of them almost persuading us that we are got into some *better library*, — are very agreeable and edifying spectacles. I can look
10 upon these defunct dragons² with complacency. Thy heavy odd-shaped ivory-handled penknives (our ancestors had everything on a larger scale than we have hearts for) are as good as anything from Herculaneum. The pounce-boxes³ of our days have gone retrograde.

15 The very clerks which I remember in the South-Sea House — I speak of forty years back — had an air very different from those in the public offices that I have had to do with since. They partook of the genius of the place!

They were mostly (for the establishment did not admit
20 of superfluous salaries) bachelors. Generally (for they had not much to do) persons of a curious and speculative turn of mind. Old-fashioned, for a reason mentioned before.

¹ It is thought that Lamb was the originator of this usage of the word.

² This name perhaps implies that the big books were things to be conquered, like the dragons that ancient knights fought with; but in this case no longer formidable foes.

³ Pounce was a resinous powder used before blotters for drying ink, or when a word was erased, for sizing the spot again for writing over.

Humorists,¹ for they were of all descriptions ; and, not having been brought together in early life (which has a tendency to assimilate the members of corporate bodies to each other), but, for the most part, placed in this house in ripe or middle age, they necessarily carried into it their separate habits and oddities, unqualified, if I may so speak, as into a common stock. Hence they formed a sort of Noah's ark. Odd fishes. A lay-monastery. Domestic retainers in a great house, kept more for show than use. Yet pleasant fellows, full of chat — and not a few among them had arrived at considerable proficiency on the German flute.

The cashier at that time was one Evans, a Cambro-Briton. He had something of the choleric complexion of his countrymen stamped on his visage, but was a worthy sensible man at bottom. He wore his hair, to the last, powdered and frizzed out, in the fashion which I remember to have seen in caricatures of what were termed, in my young days, *Maccaronies*.² He was the last of that race of beaux. Melancholy as a gib-cat over his counter all the forenoon, I think I see him, making up his cash (as they call it) with tremulous fingers, as if he feared every one about him was a defaulter ; in his hypochondry ready to imagine himself one ; haunted, at least, with the idea of the possibility of his becoming one : his tristful visage clearing up a little over his roast

¹ That is, men who indulged their oddities or eccentricities ; not as we use the word, funny men.

² The former name for dandies or dudes.

neck of veal at Anderton's at two (where his picture still hangs, taken a little before his death by desire of the master of the coffee-house, which he had frequented for the last five-and-twenty years), but not attaining the
5 meridian of its animation till evening brought on the hour of tea and visiting. The simultaneous sound of his well-known rap at the door with the stroke of the clock announcing six, was a topic of never-failing mirth in the families which this dear old bachelor gladdened with his
10 presence. Then was his *forte*, his glorified hour! How would he chirp, and expand, over a muffin! How would he dilate into secret history! His countryman, Pennant himself, in particular, could not be more eloquent than he in relation to old and new London — the site of old
15 theatres, churches, streets gone to decay — where Rosamond's pond stood — the Mulberry Gardens — and the Conduit in Cheap — with many a pleasant anecdote, derived from paternal tradition, of those grotesque figures which Hogarth has immortalized in his picture of *Noon*, —
20 the worthy descendants of those heroic confessors, who, flying to this country, from the wrath of Louis the Fourteenth and his dragoons, kept alive the flame of pure religion in the sheltering obscurities of Hog Lane, and the vicinity of the Seven Dials!

25 Deputy, under Evans, was Thomas Tame. He had the air and stoop of a nobleman. You would have taken him for one, had you met him in one of the passages leading to Westminster Hall. By stoop, I mean that gentle bending of the body forwards, which, in great

men, must be supposed to be the effect of an habitual condescending attention to the applications of their inferiors. While he held you in converse, you felt strained to the height in the colloquy. The conference over, you were at leisure to smile at the comparative insignificance 5 of the pretensions which had just awed you. His intellect was of the shallowest order. It did not reach to a saw or a proverb. His mind was in its original state of white paper. A sucking babe might have posed him. What was it then? Was he rich? Alas, no! Thomas 10 Tame was very poor. Both he and his wife looked outwardly gentlefolks, when I fear all was not well at all times within. She had a neat meagre person, which it was evident she had not sinned in over-pampering; but in its veins was noble blood. She traced her descent, by 15 some labyrinth of relationship, which I never thoroughly understood,—much less can explain with any heraldic certainty at this time of day,—to the illustrious, but unfortunate house of Derwentwater. This was the secret of Thomas's stoop. This was the thought—the sentiment— 20 the bright solitary star of your lives,—ye mild and happy pair,—which cheered you in the night of intellect, and in the obscurity of your station! This was to you instead of riches, instead of rank, instead of glittering attainments: and it was worth them all together. You in- 25 sulted none with it; but, while you wore it as a piece of defensive armour only, no insult likewise could reach you through it. *Ducus et solamen!*¹

¹ Glory and consolation. See Virgil, *Æneid*, x. 859.

Of quite another stamp was the then accountant, John Tipp. He neither pretended to high blood, nor in good truth cared one fig about the matter. He "thought 'an accountant the greatest character in the world, and himself
5 the greatest accountant in it." Yet John was not without his hobby. The fiddle relieved his vacant hours. He sang, certainly, with other notes than to the Orphean lyre. He did, indeed, scream and scrape most abominably. His fine suite of official rooms in Threadneedle Street,
10 which, without anything very substantial appended to them, were enough to enlarge a man's notions of himself that lived in them, (I know not who is the occupier of them now)¹ resounded fortnightly to the notes of a concert of "sweet breasts," as our ancestors would have
15 called them, culled from club rooms and orchestras — chorus singers — first and second violoncellos — double basses — and clarionets — who ate his cold mutton, and drank his punch, and praised his ear. He sat like Lord Midas among them. But at the desk Tipp was quite an-
20 other sort of creature. Thence all ideas, that were purely ornamental, were banished. You could not speak of anything romantic without rebuke. Politics were excluded.

¹ I have since been informed that the present tenant of them is a Mr. Lamb, a gentleman who is happy in the possession of some choice pictures, and among them a rare portrait of Milton, which I mean to do myself the pleasure of going to see, and at the same time to refresh my memory with the sight of old scenes. Mr. Lamb has the character of a right courteous and communicative collector. [Foot-note appended instead of parenthesis in *London Magazine*.]

A newspaper was thought too refined and abstracted. The whole duty of man consisted in writing off dividend warrants. The striking of the annual balance in the company's books (which, perhaps, differed from the balance of last year in the sum of 25*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.*) occupied his days and nights for a month previous. Not that Tipp was blind to the deadness of *things* (as they called them in the city) in his beloved house, or did not sigh for a return of the old stirring days when South-Sea hopes were young — (he was indeed equal to the wielding of any the most intricate accounts of the most flourishing company in these or those days) — but to a genuine accountant the difference of proceeds is as nothing. The fractional farthing is as dear to his heart as the thousands which stand before it. He is the true actor, who, whether his part be a prince or a peasant, must act it with like intensity. With Tipp form was everything. His life was formal. His actions seemed ruled with a ruler. His pen was not less erring than his heart. He made the best executor in the world: he was plagued with incessant executorships accordingly, which excited his spleen and soothed his vanity in equal ratios. He would swear (for Tipp swore) at the little orphans, whose rights he would guard with a tenacity like the grasp of the dying hand, that commended their interests to his protection. With all this there was about him a sort of timidity — (his few enemies used to give it a worse name) — a something which, in reverence to the dead, we will place, if you please, a little on this side of the heroic.

Nature certainly had been pleased to endow John Tipp with a sufficient measure of the principle of self-preservation. There is a cowardice which we do not despise, because it has nothing base or treacherous in its elements; it betrays itself, not you: it is mere temperament; the absence of the romantic and the enterprising; it sees a lion in the way, and will not, with Fortinbras, "greatly find quarrel in a straw," when some supposed honour is at stake. Tipp never mounted the box of a stage-coach in his life; or leaned against the rails of a balcony; or walked upon the ridge of a parapet; or looked down a precipice; or let off a gun; or went upon a water party; or would willingly let you go if he could have helped it: neither was it recorded of him, that for lucre, or for intimidation, he ever forsook friend or principle.

Whom next shall we summon from the dusty dead, in whom common qualities become uncommon? Can I forget thee, Henry Man, the wit, the polished man of letters, the *author*, of the South-Sea House? who never enteredst thy office in a morning, or quittedst it in midday—(what didst *thou* in an office?)—without some quirk that left a sting! Thy gibes and thy jokes are now extinct, or survive but in two forgotten volumes, which I had the good fortune to rescue from a stall in Barbican, not three days ago, and found thee terse, fresh, epigrammatic, as alive. Thy wit is a little gone by in these fastidious days—thy topics are staled by the "new-born gauds" of the time:—but great thou used to be in Public Ledgers, and in Chronicles, upon Chatham, and Shelburne, and Rock-

ingham, and Howe, and Burgoyne, and Clinton, and the war which ended in the tearing from Great Britain her rebellious colonies, — and Keppel, and Wilkes, and Sawbridge, and Bull, and Dunning, and Pratt, and Richmond, — and such small politics. —

A little less facetious, and a great deal more obstreperous, was fine rattling, rattle-headed Plumer. He was descended, — not in a right line, Reader, (for his lineal pretensions, like his personal, favoured a little of the sinister bend) from the Plumers of Hertfordshire. So tradition gave him out; and certain family features not a little sanctioned the opinion. Certainly old Walter Plumer (his reputed author) had been a rake in his days, and visited much in Italy, and had seen the world. He was uncle, bachelor-uncle, to the fine old whig still living, who has represented the county in so many successive parliaments, and has a fine old mansion near Ware. Walter flourished in George the Second's days, and was the same who was summoned before the House of Commons about a business of franks, with the old Duchess of Marlborough. You may read of it in Johnson's Life of Cave. Cave came off cleverly in that business. It is certain our Plumer did nothing to discountenance the rumour. He rather seemed pleased whenever it was, with all gentleness, insinuated. But besides his family pretensions, Plumer was an engaging fellow, and sang gloriously. —

Not so sweetly sang Plumer, as thou sangest, mild, child-like, pastoral M——; ¹ a flute's breathing less divinely

¹ "Maynard — hang'd hims'lf." Lamb's Key.

whispering than thy Arcadian melodies, when, in tones worthy of Arden, thou didst chant that song sung by Amiens to the banished Duke, which proclaims the winter wind more lenient than for a man to be ungrateful. Thy
 5 sire was old surly M——, the unapproachable churchwarden of Bishopsgate. He knew not what he did, when he begat thee, like spring, gentle offspring of blustering winter : — only unfortunate in thy ending, which should have been mild, conciliatory, swan-like. —

10 Much remains to sing. Many fantastic shapes rise up, but they must be mine in private : — already I have fooled the reader to the top of his bent ; — else could I omit that strange creature Woollett, who existed in trying the question, and *bought litigations* ? — and still stranger, inimitable,
 15 solemn Hepworth, from whose gravity Newton might have deduced the law of gravitation.¹ How profoundly would he nib a pen — with what deliberation would he wet a wafer ! —

But it is time to close — night's wheels are rattling fast
 20 over me — it is proper to have done with this solemn mockery.

Reader, what if I have been playing with thee all this while — peradventure the very *names*, which I have summoned up before thee, are fantastic — insubstantial —
 25 like Henry Pimpernel, and old John Naps of Greece : —

Be satisfied that something answering to them has had a being. Their importance is from the past.

¹ A whimsical change in the meaning of the word from its implication in gravity.

OXFORD IN THE VACATION

CASTING a preparatory glance at the bottom of this article — as the wary connoisseur in prints, with cursory eye (which, while it reads, seems as though it read not,) never fails to consult the *quis sculpsit*¹ in the corner, before he pronounces some rare piece to be a Vivares, or a Woollet 5 — methinks I hear you exclaim, Reader, *Who is Elia?*

Because in my last I tried to divert thee with some half-forgotten humours of some old clerks defunct, in an old house of business, long since gone to decay, doubtless you have already set me down in your mind as one of 10 the self-same college — a votary of the desk — a notched and cropped scrivener — one that sucks his sustenance, as certain sick people are said to do, through a quill.

Well, I do agnize² something of the sort. I confess that it is my humour, my fancy — in the fore-part of the 15 day, when the mind of your man of letters requires some relaxation — (and none better than such as at first sight seems most abhorrent from his beloved studies) — to while away some good hours of my time in the contemplation of indigos, cottons, raw silks, piece-goods, flowered or 20 otherwise. In the first place . . . and then it sends you

¹ Who engraved; referring to the label put upon works of art to name the artist.

² Acknowledge. A Shakespearean word, somewhat quaint and obsolete, of which Lamb was fond.

home with such increased appetite to your books . . . not to say, that your outside sheets, and waste wrappers of foolscap, do receive into them, most kindly and naturally, the impression of sonnets, epigrams, *essays* — so
 5 that the very parings of a counting-house are, in some sort, the settings up of an author. The enfranchised quill, that has plodded all the morning among the cart-rucks of figures and ciphers, frisks and curvets so at its ease over the flowery carpet-ground of a midnight disser-
 10 tation. — It feels its promotion. . . . So that you see, upon the whole, the literary dignity of *Elia* is very little, if at all, compromised in the condescension.

Not that, in my anxious detail of the many commodities incidental to the life of a public office, I would be thought
 15 blind to certain flaws, which a cunning carper might be able to pick in this Joseph's vest. And here I must have leave, in the fullness of my soul, to regret the abolition, and doing-away-with altogether, of those consolatory interstices, and sprinklings of freedom, through the four seasons,
 20 —the *red-letter days*, now become, to all intents and purposes, *dead letter days*. There was Paul, and Stephen, and Barnabas —

Andrew and John, men famous in old times

—we were used to keep all their days holy, as long back
 25 as I was at school at Christ's. I remember their effigies, by the same token, in the old *Baskett* Prayer Book. There hung Peter in his uneasy posture — holy Bartlemy¹ in the troublesome act of flaying, after the famous Marsyas by

¹ Old-fashioned way of writing Bartholomew.

Spagnoletti. — I honoured them all, and could almost have wept the defalcation of Iscariot — so much did we love to keep holy memories sacred : — only methought I a little grudged at the coalition of the *better Jude* with Simon — clubbing (as it were) their sanctities together, to make up 5 one poor gaudy-day between them — as an economy unworthy of the dispensation.

These were bright visitations in a scholar's and a clerk's life — "far off their coming shone." — I was as good as an almanac in those days. I could have told you such a 10 saint's day falls out next week, or the week after. Peradventure the Epiphany, by some periodical infelicity, would, once in six years, merge in a Sabbath. Now am I little better than one of the profane. Let me not be thought to arraign the wisdom of my civil superiors, who 15 have judged the further observation of these holy tides to be papistical, superstitious. Only in a custom of such long standing, methinks, if their Holinesses the Bishops had, in decency, been first sounded — but I am wading out of my depths. I am not the man to decide the limits of 20 civil and ecclesiastical authority — I am plain Elia — no Selten, nor Archbishop Usher — though at present in the thick of their books, here in the heart of learning, under the shadow of the mighty Bodley.

I can here play the gentleman, enact the student. To 25 such a one as myself, who has been defrauded in his young years of the sweet food of academic institution, nowhere is so pleasant, to while away a few idle weeks at, as one or other of the Universities. Their vacation, too, at this time of

the year, falls in so pat with *ours*. Here I can take my walks unmolested, and fancy myself of what degree or standing I please. I seem admitted *ad eundem*.¹ I fetch up past opportunities. I can rise at the chapel-bell, and dream that it rings for *me*. In moods of humility I can be a Sizar, or a Servitor. When the peacock vein rises, I strut a Gentleman Commoner. In graver moments, I proceed Master of Arts. Indeed I do not think I am much unlike that respectable character. I have seen your dim-eyed vergers, and bed-makers in spectacles, drop a bow or curtsy, as I pass, wisely mistaking me for something of the sort. I go about in black, which favours the notion. Only in Christ Church reverend quadrangle, I can be content to pass for nothing short of a Seraphic Doctor.

The walks at these times are so much one's own, — the tall trees of Christ's, the groves of Magdalen! The halls deserted, and with open doors, inviting one to slip in unperceived, and pay a *devoir* to some Founder, or noble or royal Benefactress (that should have been ours) whose portrait seems to smile upon their overlooked beadsman,² and to adopt me for their own. Then, to take a peep in by the way at the butteries, and sculleries, redolent of antique hospitality: the immense caves of kitchens, kitchen

¹To the same [degree]; a term used of the admission of a man from one university to corresponding standing in another without examination.

²A man employed to pray for another, dropping a bead with each prayer.

fire-places, cordial recesses ; ovens whose first pies were baked four centuries ago ; and spits which have cooked for Chaucer ! Not the meanest minister¹ among the dishes but is hallowed to me through his imagination, and the Cook goes forth a Manciple.² 5

Antiquity ! thou wondrous charm, what art thou ? that, being nothing, art everything ! When thou wert, thou wert not antiquity — then thou wert nothing, but hadst a remoter *antiquity*, as thou calledst it, to look back to with blind veneration ; thou thyself being to thyself flat, jejune, 10 *modern* ! What mystery lurks in this retroversion ? or what half Januses³ are we, that cannot look forward with the same idolatry with which we forever revert ! The mighty future is as nothing, being everything ! the past is everything, being nothing ! 15

What were thy *dark ages* ? Surely the sun rose as brightly then as now, and man got him to his work in the morning. Why is it that we can never hear mention of them without an accompanying feeling, as though a palpable obscure had dimmed the face of things, and that our ancestors wandered 20 to and fro groping !

Above all thy rarities, old Oxenford, what do most arride⁴ and solace me, are thy repositories of mouldering learning, thy shelves —

What a place to be in is an old library ! It seems as 25

¹ Note that this word has its primitive meaning of servant.

² Chief of a college commissariat. Lamb uses the word, perhaps, because one of Chaucer's characters, just referred to, was a Manciple.

³ Januses of one face.—*Sir Thomas Browne*. [C. L.]

⁴ To gratify laughingly ; one of Lamb's favourite old words.

though all the souls of all the writers, that have bequeathed their labours to these Bodleians, were reposing here, as in some dormitory, or middle state. I do not want to handle, to profane the leaves, their winding-sheets. I could
5 as soon dislodge a shade. I seem to inhale learning, walking amid their foliage; and the odour of their old moth-scented coverings is fragrant as the first bloom of those sciential apples which grew amid the happy orchard.

Still less have I curiosity to disturb the elder repose of
10 MSS. Those *varie lectiones*,¹ so tempting to the more erudite palates, do but disturb and unsettle my faith. I am no Herculean raker. The credit of the three witnessses might have slept unimpeached for me. I leave these curiosities to Porson, and to G. D. — whom, by the
15 way, I found busy as a moth over some rotten archive, rummaged out of some seldom-explored press, in a nook at Oriel. With long poring, he is grown almost into a book. He stood as passive as one by the side of the old shelves. I longed to new-coat him in Russia, and assign him his
20 place. He might have mustered for a tall Scapula.

D. is assiduous in his visits to these seats of learning. No inconsiderable portion of his moderate fortune, I apprehend, is consumed in journeys between them and Clifford's Inn — where, like a dove on the asp's nest, he
25 has long taken up his unconscious abode, amid an incongruous assembly of attorneys, attorneys' clerks, apparitors, promoters, vermin of the law, among whom he sits, "in calm and sinless peace." The fangs of the law pierce

¹ Different readings.

him not — the winds of litigation blow over his humble chambers — the hard sheriff's officer moves his hat as he passes — legal nor illegal discourtesy touches him — none thinks of offering violence or injustice to him — you would as soon "strike an abstract idea."

D. has been engaged, he tells me, through a course of laborious years, in an investigation into all curious matter connected with the two Universities; and has lately lit upon a MS. collection of charters, relative to C——, by which he hopes to settle some disputed points — particularly that long controversy between them as to priority of foundation. The ardour with which he engages in these liberal pursuits, I am afraid, has not met with all the encouragement it deserved, either here, or at C——. Your caputs,¹ and heads of colleges, care less than anybody else about these questions. — Contented to suck the milky fountains of their Alma Maters, without inquiring into the venerable gentlewomen's years, they rather hold such curiosities to be impertinent — unreverend. They have their good glebe lands *in manu*,² and care not much to rake into the title-deeds. I gather at least so much from other sources, for D. is not a man to complain.

D. started like an unbroke heifer, when I interrupted him. *A priori*³ it was not very probable that we should have met in Oriel. But D. would have done the same, had I accosted him on the sudden in his own walks in

¹ Heads. An abbreviation of the term *caput senatus*, "head of the senate"; an English University official.

² In hand.

³ From [what is] before = judging beforehand.

Clifford's Inn, or in the Temple. In addition to a provoking short-sightedness (the effect of late studies and watchings at the midnight oil) D. is the most absent of men. He made a call the other morning at our friend
 5 *M.*'s in Bedford Square; and, finding nobody at home, was ushered into the hall, where, asking for pen and ink, with great exactitude of purpose he enters me¹ his name in the book—which ordinarily lies about in such places, to record the failures of the untimely or unfortunate visitor—
 10 and takes his leave with many ceremonies, and professions of regret. Some two or three hours after, his walking destinies returned him into the same neighbourhood again, and again the quiet image of the fireside circle at *M.*'s—Mrs. *M.* presiding at it like a Queen Lar, with pretty
 15 *A. S.* at her side—striking irresistibly on his fancy, he makes another call (forgetting that they were “certainly not to return from the country before that day week”) and disappointed a second time, inquires for pen and paper as before: again the book is brought, and in the line just
 20 above that in which he is about to print his second name (his re-script)—his first name (scarce dry) looks out upon him like another *Sosia*, or as if a man should suddenly encounter his own duplicate!—The effect may be conceived. D. made many a good resolution against any such lapses
 25 in future. I hope he will not keep them too rigorously.

For with G. D.—to be absent from the body, is sometimes (not to speak it profanely) to be present with the Lord. At the very time when, personally encountering

¹ A redundant pronoun imitative of old usage.

thee, he passes on with no recognition — or, being stopped, starts like a thing surprised — at that moment, Reader, he is on Mount Tabor — or Parnassus — or co-sphered with Plato — or, with Harrington, framing “immortal commonwealths” — devising some plan of amelioration to thy country, or thy species — peradventure meditating some individual kindness or courtesy, to be done to *thee thyself*, the returning consciousness of which made him to start so guiltily at thy obtruded personal presence.

D. commenced life, after a course of hard study in the “House of pure Emanuel,” as usher to a knavish fanatic schoolmaster at —, at a salary of eight pounds per annum, with board and lodging. Of this poor stipend, he never received above half in all the laborious years he served this man. He tells a pleasant anecdote, that when poverty, staring out at his ragged knees, has sometimes compelled him, against the modesty of his nature, to hint at arrears, Dr. — would take no immediate notice, but, after supper, when the school was called together to even-song, he would never fail to introduce some instructive homily against riches, and the corruption of the heart occasioned through the desire of them — ending with “Lord, keep thy servants, above all things from the heinous sin of avarice. Having food and raiment, let us therewithal be content. Give me Agar’s wish,” — and the like; — which to the little auditory, sounded like a doctrine full of Christian prudence and simplicity, — but to poor D. was a receipt in full for that quarter’s demands at least.

And D. has been under-working for himself ever since ;

—drudging at low rates for unappreciating booksellers,—wasting his fine erudition in silent corrections of the classics, and in those unostentatious but solid services to learning, which commonly fall to the lot of laborious
5 scholars, who have not the art to sell themselves to the best advantage. He has published poems, which do not sell, because their character is inobtrusive like his own,—and because he has been too much absorbed in ancient literature, to know what the popular mark in poetry is,
10 even if he could have hit it. And, therefore, his verses are properly, what he terms them, *crotchets*; voluntaries; odes to Liberty, and Spring; effusions; little tributes, and offerings, left behind him, upon tables and window-seats, at parting from friends' houses; and from all the inns
15 of hospitality, where he has been courteously (or but tolerably) received in his pilgrimage. If his muse of kindness halt a little behind the strong lines, in fashion in this excitement-craving age, his prose is the best of the sort in the world, and exhibits a faithful transcript of his own healthy
20 natural mind, and cheerful innocent tone of conversation.

D. is delightful anywhere, but he is at the best in such places as these. He cares not much for Bath. He is out of his element at Buxton, at Scarborough, or Harrogate. The Cam and the Isis are to him “better than all
25 the waters of Damascus.” On the Muses' hill he is happy, and good, as one of the Shepherds on the Delectable Mountains; and when he goes about with you to show you the halls and colleges, you think you have with you the Interpreter at the House Beautiful.

POOR RELATIONS

A Poor Relation — is the most irrelevant thing in nature, — a piece of impertinent correspondency, — an odious approximation, — a haunting conscience, — a preposterous shadow, lengthening in the noontide of your prosperity, — an unwelcome remembrancer, — a perpetually recurring mortification, — a drain on your purse, — a more intolerable dun upon your pride, — a drawback upon success, — a rebuke to your rising, — a stain in your blood, — a blot on your scutcheon, — a rent in your garment, — a death's head at your banquet, — Agathocles' pot, — a Mordecai in your gate, — a Lazarus at your door, — a lion in your path, — a frog in your chamber, — a fly in your ointment, — a mote in your eye, — a triumph to your enemy, an apology to your friends, — the one thing not needful, — the hail in harvest, — the ounce of sour in a pound of sweet. 15

He is known by his knock. Your heart telleth you "That is Mr. —," A rap, between familiarity and respect; that demands, and, at the same time, seems to despair of, entertainment. He entereth smiling, and — embarrassed. He holdeth out his hand to you to shake, 20 and — draweth it back again. He casually looketh in about dinner-time — when the table is full. He offereth to go away, seeing you have company — but is induced to stay. He filleth a chair, and your visitor's two children are ac-

commodated at a side-table. He never cometh upon open days, when your wife says with some complacency, "My dear, perhaps Mr. — will drop in to-day." He remembereth birthdays—and professeth he is fortunate to have stumbled upon one. He declareth against fish, the turbot being small—yet suffereth himself to be importuned into a slice against his first resolution. He sticketh by the port—yet will be prevailed upon to empty the remainder glass of claret, if a stranger press it upon him. He is a puzzle to the servants, who are fearful of being too obsequious, or not civil enough, to him. The guests think "they have seen him before." Every one speculateth upon his condition; and the most part take him to be—a tide-waiter.¹ He calleth you by your Christian name, to imply that his other is the same with your own. He is too familiar by half, yet you wish he had less diffidence. With half the familiarity he might pass for a casual dependent; with more boldness he would be in no danger of being taken for what he is. He is too humble for a friend, yet taketh on him more state than befits a client. He is a worse guest than a country tenant, inasmuch as he bringeth up no rent—yet 'tis odds, from his garb and demeanour, that your guests take him for one. He is asked to make one at the whist table; refuseth on the score of poverty, and—resents being left out. When the company break up, he proffereth to go for a coach—and lets the servant go. He recollects your grandfather; and will thrust in some mean, and quite unimportant anecdote of—the family.

¹ A custom-house officer who boards incoming vessels.

He knew it when it was not quite so flourishing as "he is blest in seeing it now." He reviveth past situations, to institute what he calleth—favourable comparisons. With a reflecting sort of congratulation, he will inquire the price of your furniture; and insults you with a special commendation of your window-curtains. He is of opinion that the urn is the more elegant shape, but, after all, there was something more comfortable about the old tea-kettle—which you must remember. He dare say you must find a great convenience in having a carriage of your own, and appealeth to your lady if it is not so. Inquireth if you have had your arms done on vellum yet; and did not know till lately, that such and such had been the crest of the family. His memory is unseasonable; his compliments perverse; his talk a trouble; his stay pertinacious; and when he goeth away, you dismiss his chair into a corner, as precipitately as possible, and feel fairly rid of two nuisances.

There is a worse evil under the sun, and that is—a female Poor Relation. You may do something with the other; you may pass him off tolerably well; but your indigent she-relative is hopeless. "He is an old humorist,"¹ you may say, "and affects to go threadbare. His circumstances are better than folks would take them to be. You are fond of having a Character at your table, and truly he is one." But in the indications of female poverty there can be no disguise. No woman dresses below herself from caprice. The truth must out without shuffling. "She is plainly

¹ See note 1, p. 69.

related to the L——s; or what does she at their house?" She is, in all probability, your wife's cousin. Nine times out of ten, at least, this is the case. Her garb is something between a gentlewoman and a beggar, yet the former
 5 evidently predominates. She is most provokingly humble, and ostentatiously sensible to her inferiority. He may require to be repressed sometimes — *aliquando sufflammandus erat*¹ — but there is no raising her. You send her soup at dinner, and she begs to be helped — after the
 10 gentlemen. Mr. —— requests the honour of taking wine with her; she hesitates between Port and Madeira, and chooses the former — because he does. She calls the servant *Sir*; and insists on not troubling him to hold her plate. The housekeeper patronizes her. The children's governess
 15 takes upon her to correct her, when she has mistaken the piano for a harpsichord.

Richard Amlet, Esq., in the play, is a notable instance of the disadvantages, to which this chimerical notion of *affinity constituting a claim to acquaintance*, may subject
 20 the spirit of a gentleman. A little foolish blood is all that is betwixt him and a lady of great estate. His stars are perpetually crossed by the malignant maternity of an old woman, who persists in calling him "her son Dick." But she has wherewithal in the end to recompense his
 25 indignities, and float him again upon the brilliant surface, under which it had been her seeming business and pleasure all along to sink him. All men, besides, are not of Dick's

¹ "It was necessary to put the drag on sometimes;" a quotation from Seneca, adapted.

temperament. I knew an Amlet in real life, who, wanting Dick's buoyancy, sank indeed. Poor W——¹ was of my own standing at Christ's, a fine classic, and a youth of promise. If he had a blemish, it was too much pride; but its quality was inoffensive; it was not of that sort which hardens the heart, and serves to keep inferiors at a distance; it only sought to ward off derogation from itself. It was the principle of self-respect carried as far as it could go, without infringing upon that respect, which he would have every one else equally maintain for himself. He would have you to think alike with him on this topic. Many a quarrel have I had with him, when we were rather older boys, and our tallness made us more obnoxious to observation in the blue clothes, because I would not thread the alleys and blind ways of the town with him to elude notice, when we have been out together on a holiday in the streets of this sneering and prying metropolis. W—— went, sore with these notions, to Oxford, where the dignity and sweetness of a scholar's life, meeting with the alloy of a humble introduction, wrought in him a passionate devotion to the place, with a profound aversion from the society. The servitor's gown (worse than his school array) clung to him with Nessian venom. He thought himself ridiculous in a garb, under which Latimer must have walked erect; and in which Hooker, in his young days, possibly flaunted in a vein of no discommendable vanity. In the depth of college shades, or in his lonely chamber, the poor student shrunk from observation. He found shelter among books, which

¹ Lamb identifies W—— with Favell; see p. 41.

insult not ; and studies, that ask no questions of a youth's finances. He was lord of his library, and seldom cared for looking out beyond his domains. The healing influence of studious pursuits was upon him, to soothe and to abstract.

5 He was almost a healthy man ; when the waywardness of his fate broke out against him with a second and worse malignity. The father of W—— had hitherto exercised the humble profession of house-painter at N——, near Oxford. A supposed interest with some of the heads of the colleges

10 had now induced him to take up his abode in that city, with the hope of being employed upon some public works which were talked of. From that moment I read in the countenance of the young man, the determination which at length tore him from academical pursuits forever. To a person

15 unacquainted with our Universities, the distance between the gownsmen and the townsmen, as they are called — the trading part of the latter especially — is carried to an excess that would appear harsh and incredible. The temperament of W——'s father was diametrically the reverse of

20 his own. Old W—— was a little, busy, cringing tradesman, who, with his son upon his arm, would stand bowing and scraping, cap in hand, to anything that wore the semblance of a gown — insensible to the winks and opener remonstrances of the young man, to whose chamber-fellow,

25 or equal in standing, perhaps, he was thus obsequiously and gratuitously ducking. Such a state of things could not last. W—— must change the air of Oxford or be suffocated. He chose the former ; and let the sturdy moralist, who strains the point of the filial duties as high as they can bear,

censure the dereliction ; he cannot estimate the struggle. I stood with W——, the last afternoon I ever saw him, under the eaves of his paternal dwelling. It was in the fine lane leading from the High Street to the back of —— College, where W—— kept his rooms. He seemed ⁵ thoughtful, and more reconciled. I ventured to rally him — finding him in a better mood — upon a representation of the Artist Evangelist, which the old man, whose affairs were beginning to flourish, had caused to be set up in a splendid sort of frame over his really handsome shop, ¹⁰ either as a token of prosperity, or badge of gratitude to his saint. W—— looked up at the Luke, and, like Satan, “knew his mounted sign — and fled.” A letter on his father's table the next morning, announced that he had accepted a commission in a regiment about to embark for ¹⁵ Portugal. He was among the first who perished before the walls of St. Sebastian.

I do not know how, upon a subject which I began with treating half seriously, I should have fallen upon a recital so eminently painful ; but this theme of poor relationship ²⁰ is replete with so much matter for tragic as well as comic associations, that it is difficult to keep the account distinct without blending. The earliest impressions which I received on this matter, are certainly not attended with anything painful, or very humiliating, in the recalling. At ²⁵ my father's table (no very splendid one) was to be found, every Saturday, the mysterious figure of an aged gentleman, clothed in neat black, of a sad yet comely appearance. His deportment was of the essence of gravity ; his words

few or none ; and I was not to make a noise in his presence. I had little inclination to have done so — for my cue was to admire in silence. A particular elbow-chair was appropriated to him, which was in no case to
5 be violated. A peculiar sort of sweet pudding, which appeared on no other occasion, distinguished the days of his coming. I used to think him a prodigiously rich man. All I could make out of him was, that he and my father had been school-fellows a world ago at Lincoln, and that he
10 came from the Mint. The Mint I knew to be a place where all the money was coined — and I thought he was the owner of all that money. Awful ideas of the Tower twined themselves about his presence. He seemed above human infirmities and passions. A sort of melancholy
15 grandeur invested him. From some inexplicable doom I fancied him obliged to go about in an eternal suit of mourning ; a captive — a stately being, let out of the Tower on Saturdays. Often have I wondered at the temerity of my father, who, in spite of an habitual gen-
20 eral respect which we all in common manifested towards him, would venture now and then to stand up against him in some argument, touching their youthful days. The houses of the ancient city of Lincoln are divided (as most of my readers know) between the dwellers on the hill, and
25 in the valley. This marked distinction formed an obvious division between the boys who lived above (however brought together in a common school) and the boys whose paternal residence was on the plain ; a sufficient cause of hostility in the code of these young Grotiuses.

My father had been a leading Mountaineer; and would still maintain the general superiority, in skill and hardihood, of the *Aché* Boys (his own faction) over the *Belou Boys* (so were they called), of which party his contemporary had been a chieftain. Many and hot were the skirmishes on this topic—the only one upon which the old gentleman was ever brought out—and bad blood bred; even sometimes almost to the recommencement (so I expected) of actual hostilities. But my father, who scorned to insist upon advantages, generally contrived to turn the conversation upon some adroit by-commendation of the old Minister; in the general preference of which, before all other cathedrals in the island, the dweller on the hill, and the plain-born, could meet on a conciliating level, and lay down their less important differences. Once only I saw the old gentleman really ruffled, and I remembered with anguish the thought that came over me. “Perhaps he will never come here again.” He had been pressed to take another plate of the viand, which I have already mentioned as the indispensable concomitant of his visits. He had refused, with a resistance amounting to rigour—when my aunt, an old Lincolnian, but who had something of this, in common with my cousin Bridget, that she would sometimes press civility out of season—uttered the following memorable application—“Do take another slice, Mr. Billet, for you do not get pudding every day.” The old gentleman said nothing at the time—but he took occasion in the course of the evening, when some argument had intervened between them, to

utter with an emphasis which chilled the company, and which chills me now as I write it — “Woman, you are superannuated !” John Billet did not survive long, after the digesting of this affront ; but he survived long enough
5 to assure me that peace was actually restored ! and, if I remember aright, another pudding was discreetly substituted in the place of that which had occasioned the offence. He died at the Mint (Anno 1781), where he had long held, what he accounted, a comfortable independence ; and with five pounds, fourteen shillings, and a
10 penny, which were found in his escritoire after his decease, left the world, blessing God that he had enough to bury him, and that he had never been obliged to any man for a sixpence. This was — a Poor Relation.

IMPERFECT SYMPATHIES

I am of a constitution so general, that it consorts and sympathizeth with all things, I have no antipathy, or rather idiosyncrasy in anything. Those national repugnances do not touch me, nor do I behold with prejudice the French, Italian, Spaniard, or Dutch. — *Religio Medici*.

THAT the author of the *Religio Medici*, mounted upon the airy stilts of abstraction, conversant about notional and conjectural essences; in whose categories of Being the possible took the upper hand of the actual; should have overlooked the impertinent individualities of such poor concretions as mankind, is not much to be admired. It is rather to be wondered at, that in the genus of animals he should have condescended to distinguish that species at all. For myself — earth-bound and fettered to the scene of my activities, —

15

Standing on earth, not rapt above the sky,

I confess that I do feel the differences of mankind, national or individual, to an unhealthy excess. I can look with no indifferent eye upon things or persons. Whatever is, is to me a matter of taste or distaste; or when once it becomes indifferent, it begins to be disrelishing. I am, in plainer words, a bundle of prejudices — made up of likings and dislikings — the veriest thrall to sympathies, apathies, antipathies.¹ In a certain sense, I hope it may

¹ Note how, in choosing these words derived from the same Greek original, Lamb runs the scale from liking, through indifference, to dislike.

he said of me that I am a lover of my species. I can feel for all indifferently, but I cannot feel towards all equally. The more purely English word that expresses sympathy will better explain my meaning. I can be a friend to a worthy man, who upon another account cannot be my mate or *fellow*. I cannot *like* all people alike.¹

I have been trying all my life to like Scotchmen, and am obliged to desist from the experiment in despair. They cannot like me — and in truth, I never knew one of

¹ I would be understood as confining myself to the subject of *imperfect sympathies*. To nations or classes of men there can be no direct *antipathy*. There may be individuals born and constellated so opposite to another individual nature, that the same sphere cannot hold them. I have met with my moral antipodes, and can believe the story of two persons meeting (who never saw one another before in their lives) and instantly fighting.

———We by proof find there should be
 "Twixt man and man such an antipathy,
 That though he can show no just reason why
 For any former wrong or injury,
 Can neither find a blemish in his fame,
 Nor aught in face or feature justly blame,
 Can challenge or accuse him of no evil,
 Yet notwithstanding bates him as a devil.

The lines are from old Heywood's "Hierarchie of Angels," and he subjoins a curious story in confirmation, of a Spaniard who attempted to assassinate a King Ferdinand of Spain, and being put to the rack could give no other reason for the deed but an inveterate antipathy which he had taken to the first sight of the King.

———The cause which to that act compell'd him
 Was, he ne'er loved him since he first beheld him. [C. L.]

that nation who attempted to do it. There is something more plain and ingenuous in their mode of proceeding. We know one another at first sight. There is an order of imperfect intellects (under which mine must be content to rank) which in its constitution is essentially anti-Caledonian.¹ The owners of the sort of faculties I allude to, have minds rather suggestive than comprehensive. They have no pretences to much clearness or precision in their ideas, or in their manner of expressing them. Their intellectual wardrobe (to confess fairly) has few whole pieces in it. They are content with fragments and scattered pieces of Truth. She presents no full front to them — a feature or side face at the most. Hints and glimpses, germs and crude essays at a system, is the utmost they pretend to. They beat up a little game per-adventure — and leave it to knottier heads, more robust constitutions, to run it down. The light that lights them is not steady and polar, but mutable and shifting: waxing, and again waning. Their conversation is accordingly. They will throw out a random word in or out of season, and be content to let it pass for what it is worth. They cannot speak always as if they were upon their oath — but must be understood, speaking or writing, with some abatement. They seldom wait to mature a proposition, but e'en² bring it to market in the green ear. They delight to impart their defective discoveries as they arise, without waiting for their full development. They are no

¹ Caledonia is the poetic name of Scotland.

² Lamb uses this poetic abbreviation as a kind of archaism.

systematizers, and would but err more by attempting it. Their minds, as I said before, are suggestive merely. The brain of a true Caledonian (if I am not mistaken) is constituted upon quite a different plan. His Minerva is born
5 in panoply. You are never admitted to see his ideas in their growth — if, indeed, they do grow, and are not rather put together upon principles of clock-work. You never catch his mind in an undress. He never hints or suggests anything, but unlades his stock of ideas in perfect
10 order and completeness. He brings his total wealth into company, and gravely unpacks it. His riches are always about him. He never stoops to catch a glittering something in your presence, to share it with you, before he quite knows whether it be true touch or not. You can-
15 not cry *halves* to anything that he finds. He does not find, but bring. You never witness his first apprehension of a thing. His understanding is always at its meridian — you never see the first dawn, the early streaks. — He has no falterings of self-suspicion. Surmises, guesses,
20 misgivings, half-intuitions, semi-consciousnesses, partial illuminations, dim instincts, embryo conceptions, have no place in his brain, or vocabulary. The twilight of dubiety never falls upon him. Is he orthodox — he has no doubts. Is he an infidel — he has none either. Between
25 the affirmative and the negative there is no border-land with him. You cannot hover with him upon the confines of truth, or wander in the maze of a probable argument. He always keeps the path. You cannot make excursions with him — for he sets you right. His taste never fluctu-

ates. His morality never abates. He cannot compromise, or understand middle actions. There can be but a right and a wrong. His conversation is as a book. His affirmations have the sanctity of an oath. You must speak upon the square with him. He stops a metaphor like a suspected person in an enemy's country. "A healthy book!" — said one of his countrymen to me, who had ventured to give that appellation to John Bunce, — "did I catch rightly what you said? I have heard of a man in health, and of a healthy state of body, but I do not see how that epithet can be properly applied to a book." Above all, you must beware of indirect expressions before a Caledonian. Clap an extinguisher upon your irony, if you are unhappily blest with a vein of it. Remember you are upon your oath. I have a print of a graceful female after Leonardo da Vinci, which I was showing off to Mr. ——. After he had examined it minutely, I ventured to ask him how he liked MY BEAUTY (a foolish name it goes by among my friends) — when he very gravely assured me, that "he had considerable respect for my character and talents" (so he was pleased to say), "but had not given himself much thought about the degree of my personal pretensions." The misconception staggered me, but did not seem much to disconcert him. — Persons of this nation are particularly fond of affirming a truth — which nobody doubts. They do not so properly affirm, as annunciate it. They do indeed appear to have such a love of truth (as if, like virtue, it were valuable for itself) that all truth becomes equally valuable, whether

the proposition that contains it be new or old, disputed, or such as is impossible, become a subject of disputation. I was present not long since at a party of North Britons, where a son of Burns was expected; and happened to drop a silly expression (in my South British way), that I wished it were the father instead of the son — when four of them started up at once to inform me, that “that was impossible, because he was dead.” An impracticable wish, it seems, was more than they could conceive. Swift has hit off this part of their character, namely their love of truth, in his biting way, but with an illiberality that necessarily confines the passage to the margin.¹ The tediousness of these people is certainly provoking. I wonder if they ever tire one another! — In my early life I had a passionate fondness for the poetry of Burns. I have sometimes foolishly hoped to ingratiate myself with his countrymen by expressing it. But I have always found that a true Scot resents your admiration of his compatriot, even more than he would your contempt of him. The latter he imputes to your “imperfect acquaintance with many of the words which he

¹ There are some people who think they sufficiently acquit themselves, and entertain their company, with relating facts of no consequence, not at all out of the road of such common incidents as happen every day; and this I have observed more frequently among the Scots than any other nation, who are very careful not to omit the minutest circumstances of time or place; which kind of discourse, if it were not a little relieved by the uncouth terms and phrases, as well as accent and gesture peculiar to that country, would be hardly tolerable. — *Hints towards an Essay on Conversation.* [C. L.]

uses ; " and the same objection makes it a presumption in you to suppose that you can admire him. — Thomson they seem to have forgotten. Smollett they have neither forgotten nor forgiven for his delineation of Rory and his companion, upon their first introduction to our metropolis. — Speak of Smollett as a great genius, and they will retort upon you Hume's History compared with *his* Continuation of it. What if the historian had continued Humphrey Clinker?

I have, in the abstract, no disrespect for Jews. They are a piece of stubborn antiquity, compared with which Stonehenge is in its nonage. They date beyond the pyramids. But I should not care to be in habits of familiar intercourse with any of that nation. I confess that I have not the nerves to enter their synagogues. Old prejudices cling about me. I cannot shake off the story of Hugh of Lincoln. Centuries of injury, contempt, and hate, on the one side, — of cloaked revenge, dissimulation, and hate, on the other, between our and their fathers, must, and ought, to affect the blood of the children. I cannot believe it can run clear and kindly yet ; or that a few fine words, such as candour, liberality, the light of a nineteenth century, can close up the breaches of so deadly a disunion. A Hebrew is nowhere congenial to me. He is least distasteful on 'Change — for the mercantile spirit levels all distinctions, as all are beauties in the dark. I boldly confess that I do not relish the approximation of Jew and Christian, which has become so fashionable. The reciprocal endearments have, to me, something hypocritical and

unnatural in them. I do not like to see the Church and Synagogue kissing and congeeing¹ in awkward postures of an affected civility. If *they* are converted, why do they not come over to us altogether? Why keep up a form of separation, when the life of it is fled? If they can sit with us at table, why do they keck² at our cookery? I do not understand these half convertites. Jews christianizing — Christians judaizing — puzzle me. I like fish or flesh. A moderate Jew is a more confounding piece of anomaly than a wet Quaker. The spirit of the synagogue is essentially *separative*. B——³ would have been more in keeping if he had abided by the faith of his forefathers. There is a fine scorn in his face, which nature meant to be of — Christians. The Hebrew spirit is strong in him, in spite of his proselytism. He cannot conquer the Shibboleth. How it breaks out, when he sings, "The Children of Israel passed through the Red Sea!" The auditors, for the moment, are as Egyptians to him, and he rides over our necks in triumph. There is no mistaking him. — B—— has a strong expression of sense in his countenance, and it is confirmed by his singing. The foundation of his vocal excellence is sense. He sings with understanding, as Kemble delivered dialogue. He would sing the Commandments, and give an appropriate character to each prohibition. His nation, in general, have not ever-sensible countenances. How should they? — but you seldom see a silly expression among them. Gain, and the pursuit of gain, sharpen a man's visage. I never heard

¹ Bowing ceremoniously.² Retch.³ Braham, the tenor.

of an idiot being born among them. — Some admire the Jewish female physiognomy. I admire it — but with trembling. Jael had those full dark inscrutable eyes.

In the Negro countenance you will often meet with strong traits of benignity. I have felt yearnings of tenderness towards some of these faces — or rather masks — that have looked out kindly upon one in casual encounters in the streets and highways. I love what Fuller beautifully calls — these “images of God cut in ebony.” But I should not like to associate with them, to share my meals ¹⁰ and my good-nights with them — because they are black.

I love Quaker ways, and Quaker worship. I venerate the Quaker principles. It does me good for the rest of the day when I meet any of their people in my path. When I am ruffled or disturbed by any occurrence, the ¹⁵ sight, or quiet voice of a Quaker, acts upon me as a ventilator, lightening the air, and taking off a load from the bosom. But I cannot like the Quakers (as Desdemona would say) “to live with them.” I am all over sophisticated — with humours, fancies, craving hourly sympathy. ²⁰ I must have books, pictures, theatres, chit-chat, scandal, jokes, ambiguities, and a thousand whim-whams, which their simpler taste can do without. I should starve at their primitive banquet. My appetites are too high for the salads which (according to Evelyn) Eve dressed for ²⁵ the angel, my gusto too excited

To sit a guest with Daniel at his pulse.

The indirect answers which Quakers are often found to return to a question put to them may be explained, I

think, without the vulgar assumption, that they are more given to evasion and equivocating than other people. They naturally look to their words more carefully, and are more cautious of committing themselves. They have
5 a peculiar character to keep up on this head. They stand in a manner upon their veracity. A Quaker is by law exempted from taking an oath. The custom of resorting to an oath in extreme cases, sanctified as it is by all religious antiquity, is apt (it must be confessed) to intro-
10 duce into the laxer sort of minds the notion of two kinds of truth—the one applicable to the solemn affairs of justice, and the other to the common proceedings of daily intercourse. As truth bound upon the conscience by an oath can be but truth, so in the common affirma-
15 tions of the shop and the market-place a latitude is expected, and conceded upon questions wanting this solemn covenant. Something less than truth satisfies. It is common to hear a person say, “You do not expect me to speak as if I were upon my oath.” Hence a great
20 deal of incorrectness and inadvertency, short of falsehood, creeps into ordinary conversation; and a kind of secondary or laic-truth is tolerated, where clergy-truth—oath-truth, by the nature of the circumstances, is not required. A Quaker knows none of this distinction. His simple af-
25 firmation being received, upon the most sacred occasions, without any further test, stamps a value upon the words which he is to use upon the most indifferent topics of life. He looks to them, naturally, with more severity. You can have of him no more than his word. He knows,

If he is caught tripping in a casual expression, he forfeits, for himself, at least, his claim to the invidious exemption. He knows that his syllables are weighed—and how far a consciousness of this particular watchfulness, exerted against a person, has a tendency to produce indirect answers, and a diverting of the question by honest means, might be illustrated, and the practice justified, by a more sacred example than is proper to be adduced upon this occasion. The admirable presence of mind, which is numerous in Quakers upon all contingencies, might be traced to this imposed self-watchfulness—if it did not seem rather an humble and secular acumen of that old stock of religious constancy, which never bent or filtered, in the Primitive Friends, or gave way to the winds of persecution, to the violence of judge or accuser, under trials and rack-ing examinations. "You will never be the wiser, if I sit here answering your questions till midnight," said one of those upright Justicers to Penn, who had been putting law-cases with a puzzling subtlety. "Thereafter as the answers may be," retorted the Quaker. The astonishing composure of this people is sometimes ludicrously displayed in lighter instances.—I was travelling in a stage-coach with three male Quakers, buttoned up in the strictest nonconformity of their sect. We stopped to bait at Andover, where a meal, partly tea apparatus, partly as supper, was set before us. My friends confined themselves to the tea-table. I in my way took supper. When the landlady brought in the bill, the eldest of my com-

¹That is, strictest; *de Andover* 5.

panions discovered that she had charged for both meals. This was resisted. Mine hostess was very clamorous and positive. Some mild arguments were used on the part of the Quakers, for which the heated mind of the good lady seemed by no means a fit recipient. The guard came in with his usual peremptory notice. The Quakers pulled out their money, and formally tendered it—so much for tea—I, in humble imitation, tendering mine—for the supper which I had taken. She would not relax in her demand. So they all three quietly put up their silver, as did myself, and marched out of the room, the eldest and gravest going first, with myself closing up the rear, who thought I could not do better than follow the example of such grave and warrantable personages. We got in. The steps went up. The coach drove off. The murmurs of mine hostess, not very indistinctly or ambiguously pronounced, became after a time inaudible—and now my conscience, which the whimsical scene had for a while suspended, beginning to give some twitches, I waited, in the hope that some justification would be offered by these serious persons for the seeming injustice of their conduct. To my great surprise, not a syllable was dropped on the subject. They sat as mute as at a meeting. At length the eldest of them broke silence, by inquiring of his next neighbour, “Hast thee heard how indigos go at the India House?” and the question operated as a soporific on my moral feeling as far as Exeter.

OLD CHINA

I HAVE an almost feminine partiality for old china. When I go to see any great house, I inquire for the china-closet, and next for the picture gallery. I cannot defend the order of preference, but by saying, that we have all some taste or other, of too ancient a date to admit of our remembering distinctly that it was an acquired one. I can call to mind the first play, and the first exhibition, that I was taken to; but I am not conscious of a time when china jars and saucers were introduced into my imagination.

I had no repugnance then — why should I now have? — to those little, lawless, azure tinctured grotesques, that under the notion of men and women, float about, uncircumscribed by any element, in that world before perspective — a china tea-cup.

I like to see my old friends — whom distance cannot diminish — figuring up in the air (so they appear to our optics), yet on *terra firma* still — for so we must in courtesy interpret that speck of deeper blue, which the decorous artist, to prevent absurdity, has made to spring up beneath their sandals.

I love the men with women's faces, and the women, if possible, with still more womanish expressions.

Here is a young and courtly Mandarin, handing tea to a lady from a salver — two miles off. See how distance

seems to set off respect ! And here the same lady, or another — for likeness is identity on tea-cups — is stepping into a little fairy boat, moored on the hither side of this calm garden river, with a dainty mincing foot, which in a right angle of incidence (as angles go in our world) must infallibly land her in the midst of a flowery mead — a furlong off on the other side of the same strange stream !

Farther on — if far or near can be predicated of their world — see horses, trees, pagodas, dancing the hays.¹

10 Here — a cow and rabbit couchant,² and coextensive — so objects show, seen through the lucid atmosphere of fine Cathay.³

I was pointing out to my cousin last evening, over our Hyson⁴ (which we are old-fashioned enough to drink unmixed still of an afternoon) some of these *speciosa miracula*⁵ upon a set of extraordinary old blue china (a recent purchase) which we were now for the first time using ; and could not help remarking, how favourable circumstances had been to us of late years, that we could afford
20 to please the eye sometimes with trifles of this sort — when a passing sentiment seemed to overshadow the brows

¹ The name of an old English dance.

² Lying down ; a heraldic term.

³ This name, which was applied by Marco Polo the explorer to the vaguely conjectured regions of the far East, came to be the poetic name for China.

⁴ A variety of tea.

⁵ Shining wonders ; phrase quoted from Horace. — *Ars Poetica*,

of my companion. I am quick at detecting these summer clouds in Bridget.

"I wish the good old times would come again," she said, "when we were not quite so rich. I do not mean, that I want to be poor; but there was a middle state;"⁵ — so she was pleased to ramble on, — "in which I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase, now that you have money enough and to spare. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury (and, O! how much ado I had to get you¹⁰ to consent in those times!) we were used to have a debate two or three days before, and to weigh the *for* and *against*, and think what we might spare it out of, and what saving we could hit upon, that should be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the¹⁵ money that we paid for it.

"Do you remember the brown suit, which you made to hang upon you, till all your friends cried shame upon you, it grew so threadbare — and all because of that folio Beaumont and Fletcher, which you dragged home late at²⁰ night from Barker's in Covent Garden? Do you remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to the purchase, and had not come to a determination till it was near ten o'clock of the Saturday night, when you set off from Islington, fearing you should be too²⁵ late — and when the old bookseller with some grumbling opened his shop, and by the twinkling taper (for he was setting bedwards) lighted out the relic from his dusty treasures — and when you lugged it home, wishing it were

twice as cumbersome — and when you presented it to me — and when we were exploring the perfectness of it (*collating*¹ you called it) — and while I was repairing some of the loose leaves with paste, which your impatience would not suffer to be left till daybreak — was there no pleasure in being a poor man? or can those neat black clothes which you wear now, and are so careful to keep brushed, since we have become rich and finical, give you half the honest vanity, with which you flaunted it about in that overworn suit — your old *corbeau*² — for four or five weeks longer than you should have done, to pacify your conscience for the mighty sum of fifteen — or sixteen shillings was it? — a great affair we thought it then — which you had lavished on the old folio. Now you can afford to buy any book that pleases you, but I do not see that you ever bring me home any nice old purchases now.

“When you came home with twenty apologies for laying out a less number of shillings upon that print after Leonardo, which we christened the ‘Lady Blanch;’ when you looked at the purchase, and thought of the money — and thought of the money, and looked again at the picture — was there no pleasure in being a poor man? Now, you have nothing to do but to walk into Colnaghi’s, and buy a wilderness of Leonardos. Yet do you?”

“Then, do you remember our pleasant walks to Enfield, and Potter’s Bar, and Waltham, when we had a holiday

¹ A critic’s term for comparing passages in books; also a printer’s or librarian’s term for verifying sheets and signatures in books.

² A draper’s term; from *corbeau*, a raven. *see* *owl*

— holidays, and all other fun, are gone, now we are rich — and the little handbasket in which I used to deposit our day's fare of savoury cold lamb and salad — and how you would pry about at noontide for some decent house, where we might go in, and produce our store — only paying for the ale that you must call for — and speculate upon the looks of the landlady, and whether she was likely to allow us a table-cloth — and wish for such another honest hostess, as Izaak Walton has described many a one on the pleasant banks of the Lea, when he went to a fishing — and sometimes they would prove obliging enough, and sometimes they would look grudgingly upon us — but we had cheerful looks still for one another, and would eat our plain food savourily, scarcely grudging Piscator his Trout Hall? Now, when we go out a day's pleasuring, which is seldom moreover, we *ride* part of the way — and go into a fine inn, and order the best of dinners, never debating the expense — which, after all, never has half the relish of those chance country snaps,¹ when we were at the mercy of uncertain usage, and a precarious welcome.

“ You are too proud to see a play anywhere now but in the pit. Do you remember where it was we used to sit, when we saw the *Battle of Hexham*, and the *Surrender of Calais*, and *Bannister* and *Mrs. Bland* in the *Children in the Wood* — when we squeezed out our shillings apiece to sit three or four times in a season in the one-shilling gallery — where you felt all the time that you

¹ The term used now-a-days is snacks.

ought not to have brought me — and more strongly I felt obligation to you for having brought me — and the pleasure was the better for a little shame — and when the curtain drew up, what cared we for our place in the house, or what mattered it where we were sitting, when our thoughts were with Rosalind in Arden, or with Viola at the Court of Illyria? You used to say, that the gallery was the best place of all for enjoying a play socially — that the relish of such exhibitions must be in proportion to the infrequency of going — that the company we met there, not being in general readers of plays, were obliged to attend the more, and did attend, to what was going on, on the stage — because a word lost would have been a chasm, which it was impossible for them to fill up. With such reflections we consoled our pride then — and I appeal to you, whether, as a woman, I met generally with less attention and accommodation, than I have done since in more expensive situations in the house? The getting in indeed, and the crowding up those inconvenient staircases, was bad enough, — but there was still a law of civility to women recognized to quite as great an extent as we ever found in the other passages — and how a little difficulty overcome heightened the snug seat, and the play, afterwards! Now we can only pay our money, and walk in. You cannot see, you say, in the galleries now. I am sure we saw, and heard too, well enough then — but sight, and all, I think, is gone with our poverty.

“There was pleasure in eating strawberries, before they became quite common — in the first dish of peas, while

they were yet dear — to have them for a nice supper, a treat. What treat can we have now? If we were to treat ourselves now — that is, to have dainties a little above our means — it would be selfish and wicked. It is the very little more that we allow ourselves beyond what the actual poor can get at, that makes what I call a treat — when two people living together, as we have done, now and then indulge themselves in a cheap luxury, which both like; while each apologizes, and is willing to take both halves of the blame to his single share. I see no harm in people making much of themselves in that sense of the word. It may give them a hint how to make much of others. But now — what I mean by the word — we never do make much of ourselves. None but the poor can do it. I do not mean the veriest ¹ poor of all, but persons as we were, just above poverty.

"I know what you were going to say, that it is mighty pleasant at the end of the year to make all meet — and much ado we used to have every Thirty-first Night of December to account for our exceedings — many a long face did you make over your puzzled accounts, and in contriving to make it out how we had spent so much — or that we had not spent so much — or that it was impossible we should spend so much next year — and still we found our slender capital decreasing — but then, betwixt ways, and projects, and compromises of one sort or another, and talk of curtailing this charge, and doing without that for the

¹ Note the superlative sign on the adverb instead of the adjective, making a delicate distinction in sense.

future — and the hope that youth brings, and laughing spirits (in which you were never poor till now,) we pocketed up our loss, and in conclusion, with ‘lusty brimmers’ (as you used to quote it out of *heartily cheerful Mr. Cotton*, as you called him), we used to welcome in the ‘coming guest.’ Now we have no reckoning at all at the end of the old year — no flattering promises about the new year doing better for us.”

Bridget is so sparing of her speech on most occasions, so that when she gets into a rhetorical vein, I am careful how I interrupt it. I could not help, however, smiling at the phantom of wealth which her dear imagination had conjured up out of a clear income of poor — hundred pounds a year. “It is true we were happier when we were poorer, but we were also younger, my cousin. I am afraid we must put up with the excess, for if we were to shake the superfluous into the sea, we should not much mend ourselves. That we had much to struggle with, as we grew up together, we have reason to be most thankful. It strengthened, and knit our compact closer. We could never have been what we have been to each other, if we had always had the sufficiency which you now complain of. The resisting power — those natural dilations of the youthful spirit, which circumstances cannot straiten¹ — with us are long since passed away. Competence to age is supplementary youth; a sorry supplement indeed, but I fear the best that is to be had. We must ride, where we

¹ Note that this is not the same as *straighten*; this means “to make narrow.” Compare note on *straitest*, page 107.

formerly walked : live better, and lie softer—and shall be wise to do so—than we had means to do in those good old days you speak of. Yet could those days return—could you and I once more walk our thirty miles aday—could Bannister and Mrs. Bland again be young, and you and I be young to see them—could the good old one-shilling gallery days return—they are dreams, my cousin, now—but could you and I at this moment, instead of this quiet argument, by our well-carpeted fireside, sitting on this luxurious sofa—be once more struggling up those inconvenient staircases, pushed about, and squeezed, and elbowed by the poorest rabble of poor gallery scramblers—could I once more hear those anxious shrieks of yours—and the delicious *Thank God, we are safe*, which always followed when the topmost stair, conquered, let in the first light of the whole cheerful theatre down beneath us—I know not the fathom line that ever touched a descent so deep as I would be willing to bury more wealth in than Cræsus had, or the great Jew R——¹ is supposed to have, to purchase it. And now do just look at that merry little Chinese waiter holding an umbrella, big enough for a bed tester, over the head of that pretty insipid half-Madonnaish chit of a lady in that very blue summer-house.”

¹ Nathan Mayer Rothschild, the eminent financier.

DETACHED THOUGHTS ON BOOKS AND READING

To mind the inside of a book is to entertain one's self with the forced product of another man's brain. Now I think a man of quality and breeding may be much amused with the natural sprouts of his own. — *Lord Pippington in The Relapse.*

5 An ingenious acquaintance of my own was so much struck with this bright sally of his Lordship, that he has left off reading altogether, to the great improvement of his originality. At the hazard of losing some credit on this head, I must confess that I dedicate no inconsiderable portion of my time to other people's thoughts. I dream away my life in others' speculations. I love to lose myself in other men's minds. When I am not walking, I am reading, I cannot sit and think. Books think for me.

15 I have no repugnances. Shaftesbury is not too genteel for me, nor Jonathan Wild too low. I can read anything which I call a *book*. There are things in that shape which I cannot allow for such.

In this catalogue of *books which are no books* — *bibliu*
20 *a-bibliu*¹ — I reckon Court Calendars, Directories, Pocket Books, Draught Boards bound and lettered at the back, Scientific Treatises, Almanacs, Statutes at Large; the works of Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Beattie, Soame Jenyns,

¹ A Greek derivative = books that are not books. Note that from this word *bibliu* comes our word *little*.

Thoughts on Books and Reading 119

and, generally, all those volumes which "no gentleman's library should be without:" the Histories of Flavius Josephus (that learned Jew), and Paley's Moral Philosophy. With these exceptions, I can read almost anything. I bless my stars for a taste so catholic, so unexclud-⁵ing.

I confess that it moves my spleen to see these *things in books' clothing* perched upon shelves, like false saints, usurpers of true shrines, intruders into the sanctuary, thrusting out the legitimate occupants. To reach down¹⁰ a well-bound semblance of a volume, and hope it is some kind-hearted play-book, then, opening what "seem its leaves," to come bolt upon a withering Population Essay. To expect a Steele, or a Farquhar, and find—Adam Smith. To view a well-arranged assortment of block-¹⁵headed Encyclopædias (Anglicanas or Metropolitanas) set out in an array of Russia, or Morocco, when a tithe of that good leather would comfortably reclothe my shivering folios; would renovate Paracelsus himself, and enable old Raymund Lully to look like himself again in the world.²⁰ I never see these impostors, but I long to strip them, to warm my ragged veterans in their spoils.

To be strong-backed and neat-bound is the desideratum of a volume. Magnificence comes after. This, when it can be afforded, is not to be lavished upon all kinds of²⁵ books indiscriminately. I would not dress a set of Magazines, for instance, in full suit. The dishabille, or half-binding (with Russia backs ever) is *our* costume. A Shakespeare, or a Milton (unless the first editions), it

were mere foppery to trick out in gay apparel. The possession of them confers no distinction. The exterior of them (the things themselves being so common), strange to say, raises no sweet emotions, no tickling sense of property in the owner. Thomson's Seasons, again, looks best (I maintain it) a little torn, and dog's eared. How beautiful to a genuine lover of reading are the sullied leaves, and worn-out appearance, nay, the very odour (beyond Russia), if we would not forget kind feelings in
 10 fastidiousness, of an old "Circulating Library" Tom Jones, or Vicar of Wakefield! How they speak of the thousand thumbs, that have turned over their pages with delight! — of the lone sempstress, whom they may have cheered (milliner, or harder-working mantua-maker)
 15 after her long day's needle-toil, running far into midnight, when she has snatched an hour, ill spared from sleep, to steep her cares, as in some Lethean cup, in spelling out their enchanting contents! Who would have them a whit less soiled? What better condition could we desire
 20 to see them in?

In some respects the better a book is, the less it demands from binding. Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, and all that class of perpetually self-reproductive volumes — Great Nature's Stereotypes — we see them individually perish with less re-
 25 gret, because we know the copies of them to be "eternæ."¹ But where a book is at once both good and rare — where the individual is almost the species, and when *that* perishes,

¹ Lamb borrows this form of the word from *Macbeth*.

Thoughts on Books and Reading 121

We know not where is that Promethean torch
That can its light relumine —

such a book, for instance, as the Life of the Duke of Newcastle, by his Duchess — no casket is rich enough, no casing sufficiently durable, to honour and keep safe such a jewel.

Not only rare volumes of this description, which seem hopeless ever to be reprinted ; but old editions of writers, such as Sir Philip Sydney, Bishop Taylor, Milton in his prose-works, Fuller — of whom we *have* reprints, yet the books themselves, though they go about, and are talked of here and there, we know, have not endenized¹ themselves (nor possibly ever will) in the national heart, so as to become stock books — it is good to possess these in durable and costly covers. I do not care for a First Folio of Shakespeare. (You cannot make a *pet* book of an author whom everybody reads.)² I rather prefer the common editions of Rowe and Tonson, without notes, and with *plates*, which, being so execrably bad, serve as maps, or modest remembrancers, to the text ; and without pretending to any supposable emulation with it, are so much better than the Shakespeare gallery *engravings*, which *did*. I have a community of feeling with my countrymen about his Plays, and I like those editions of him best, which have been oftenest tumbled about and handled. — On the contrary, I cannot read Beaumont and Fletcher but in Folio.

¹ Lamb's quaint preference for our term *'naturalize'*.

² The sentence in parenthesis was omitted in the collected edition.

The Octavo editions are painful to look at. I have no sympathy with them. If they were as much read as the current editions of the other poet, I should prefer them in that shape to the older one. I do not know a more
5 heartless sight than the reprint of the Anatomy of Melancholy. What need was there of unearthing the bones of that fantastic old great man, to expose them in a winding-sheet of the newest fashion to modern censure? what hapless stationer could dream of Burton ever be-
10 coming popular? — The wretched Malone could not do worse, when he bribed the sexton of Stratford church to let him whitewash the painted effigy of old Shakespeare, which stood there, in rude but lively fashion depicted, to the very colour of the cheek, the eye, the eyebrow, hair,
15 the very dress he used to wear — the only authentic testimony we had, however imperfect, of these curious parts and parcels of him. They covered him over with a coat of white paint. By —, if I had been a justice of peace for Warwickshire, I would have clapped both commentator
20 and sexton fast in the stocks, for a pair of meddling sacrilegious varlets.

I think I see them at their work — these sapient trouble-tombs.

Shall I be thought fantastical, if I confess, that the names
25 of some of our poets sound sweeter, and have a finer relish to the ear — to mine, at least — than that of Milton or of Shakespeare? It may be, that the latter are more staled and rung upon in common discourse. The sweetest names, and which carry a perfume in the mention,

Thoughts on Books and Reading 123

are Kit Marlowe, Drayton, Drummond of Hawthornden, and Cowley.

Much depends upon *when* and *where* you read a book. In the five or six impatient minutes, before the dinner is quite ready, who would think of taking up the Fairy Queen for a stop-gap, or a volume of Bishop Andrewes' sermons?

Milton almost requires a solemn service of music to be played before you enter upon him. But he brings his music, to which, who listens, had need bring docile thoughts, and purged ears.

Winter evenings — the world shut out — with less of ceremony the gentle Shakespeare enters. At such a season, the Tempest, or his own Winter's Tale —

These two poets you cannot avoid reading aloud — to yourself, or (as it chances) to some single person listening. More than one — and it degenerates into an audience.

Books of quick interest, that hurry on for incidents, are for the eye to glide over only. It will not do to read them out. I could never listen to even the better kind of modern novels without extreme irksomeness.

A newspaper, read out, is intolerable. In some of the Bank offices it is the custom (to save so much individual time) for one of the clerks — who is the best scholar — to commence upon the Times, or the Chronicle, and recite its entire contents aloud *pro bono publico*.¹ With every advantage of lungs and elocution, the effect is singularly

¹ For public good.

vapid. In barbers' shops and public-houses a fellow will get up, and spell out a paragraph, which he communicates as some discovery. Another follows with *his* selection. So the entire journal transpires at length by piecemeal. Seldom-readers are slow readers, and, without this expedient no one in the company would probably ever travel through the contents of a whole paper.

Newspapers always excite curiosity. No one ever lays one down without a feeling of disappointment.

10 What an eternal time that gentleman in black, at Nando's, keeps the paper ! I am sick of hearing the waiter bawling out incessantly, "The Chronicle is in hand, Sir."

Coming into an inn at night — having ordered your supper — what can be more delightful than to find lying 15 in the window-seat, left there time out of mind by the carelessness of some former guest — two or three numbers of the old Town and Country Magazine, with its amusing *à-à-à-à* pictures — "The Royal Lover and Lady G—— ;" "The Melting Platonic and the old Bean," — 20 and such like antiquated scandal? Would you exchange it — at that time, and in that place — for a better book?

Poor Tobin, who latterly fell blind, did not regret it so much for the weightier kinds of reading — the *Paradise Lost*, or *Comus*, he could have *read* to him — but he 25 missed the pleasure of skimming over with his own eye a magazine, or a light pamphlet.

I should not care to be caught in the serious avenues of some cathedral alone, and reading *Candide*.

I do not remember a more whimsical surprise than

Thoughts on Books and Reading 125

having been once detected — by a familiar damsel — reclined at my ease upon the grass, on Primrose Hill (her Cythera), reading — *Pamela*. There was nothing in the book to make a man seriously ashamed at the exposure ; but as she seated herself down by me, and seemed determined to read in company, I could have wished it had been — any other book. We read on very sociably for a few pages ; and, not finding the author much to her taste, she got up, and — went away. Gentle casuist, I leave it to thee to conjecture, whether the blush (for there was one 10 between us) was the property of the nymph or the swain in this dilemma. From me you shall never get the secret.

I am not much a friend to out-of-doors reading. I cannot settle my spirits to it. I knew a Unitarian minister, who was generally to be seen upon Snow Hill (as yet 15 Skinner's Street *was not*), between the hours of ten and eleven in the morning, studying a volume of Lardner. I own this to have been a strain of abstraction beyond my reach. I used to admire how he sidled along, keeping clear of secular contacts. An illiterate encounter 20 with a porter's knot, or a bread-basket, would have quickly put to flight all the theology I am master of, and have left me worse than indifferent to the five points.

There is a class of street-readers, whom I can never contemplate without affection — the poor gentry, who, not 25 having wherewithal to buy or hire a book, filch a little learning at the open stalls — the owner, with his hard eye, casting envious looks at them all the while, and thinking when they will have done. Venturing tenderly.

page after page, expecting every moment when he shall interpose his interdict, and yet unable to deny themselves the gratification, they "snatch a fearful joy." Martin B——, in this way, by daily fragments, got through two
 5 volumes of *Clarissa*, when the stall-keeper damped his laudable ambition, by asking him (it was in his younger days) whether he meant to purchase the work. M. declares, that under no circumstances of his life did he ever peruse a book with half the satisfaction which he took in
 10 those uneasy snatches. A quaint poetess of our day has moralized upon this subject in two very touching but homely stanzas.

- I saw a boy with eager eye
 Open a book upon a stall,
 15 And read, as he'd devour it all ;
 Which when the stallman did espy,
 Soon to the boy I heard him call,
 "You, Sir, you never buy a book,
 Therefore in one you shall not look."
 20 The boy pass'd slowly on, and with a sigh
 He wish'd he never had been taught to read,
 Then of the old churl's books he should have had no need.
 Of sufferings the poor have many,
 Which never can the rich annoy :
 25 I soon perceiv'd another boy,
 Who look'd as if he'd not had any
 Food, for that day at least — enjoy
 The sight of cold meat in a tavern larder.
 This boy's case, then thought I, is surely harder,
 30 Thus hungry, longing, thus without a penny,
 Beholding choice of dainty-dress'd meat :
 No wonder if he wish he ne'er had learn'd to eat.

GRACE BEFORE MEAT

THE custom of saying grace at meals had, probably, its origin in the early times of the world, and the hunter-state of man, when dinners were precarious things, and a full meal was something more than a common blessing ; when a belly-ful was a windfall, and looked like a special providence. In the shouts and triumphal songs with which, after a season of sharp abstinence, a lucky booty of deer's or goat's flesh would naturally be ushered home, existed, perhaps, the germ of the modern grace. It is not otherwise easy to be understood, why the blessing of food — the act of eating — should have had a particular expression of thanksgiving annexed to it, distinct from that implied and silent gratitude with which we are expected to enter upon the enjoyment of the many other various gifts and good things of existence. 15

I own that I am disposed to say grace upon twenty other occasions in the course of the day besides my dinner. I want a form for setting out upon a pleasant walk, for a moonlight ramble, for a friendly meeting, or a solved problem. Why have we none for books, those spiritual repasts — a grace before Milton — a grace before Shakespeare — a devotional exercise proper to be said before reading the *Fairy Queen*? — but, the received ritual having prescribed these forms to the solitary ceremony of man-

ducation,¹ I shall confine my observations to the experience which I have had of the grace, properly so called; commending my new scheme for extension to a niche in the grand philosophical, poetical, and perchance in part
 5 heretical, liturgy, now compiling by my friend Homo Humanus, for the use of a certain snug congregation of Utopian Rabelaesian Christians, no matter where assembled.

The form then of the benediction before eating has
 10 its beauty at a poor man's table, or at the simple and unprovocative repasts of children. It is here that the grace becomes exceedingly graceful. The indigent man, who hardly knows whether he shall have a meal the next day or not, sits down to his fare with a present sense of
 15 the blessing, which can be but feebly acted by the rich, into whose minds the conception of wanting a dinner could never, but by some extreme theory, have entered. The proper end of food—the animal sustenance—is barely contemplated by them. The poor man's bread is
 20 his daily bread,² literally his bread for the day. Their courses are perennial.

Again, the plainest diet seems the fittest to be preceded by the grace. That which is least stimulative to appetite, leaves the mind most free for foreign considerations.
 25 A man may feel thankful, heartily thankful, over a dish

¹ A good example of Lamb's love of quaintness, — using an unfamiliar word for a very common and familiar thing. Cf. p. 66, note 1.

² An allusion to the petition for daily bread in the *Lord's Prayer*.

of plain mutton with turnips, and have leisure to reflect upon the ordinance and institution of eating; when he shall confess a perturbation of mind, inconsistent with the purposes of the grace, at the presence of venison or turtle. When I have sat (*a rarus hospes*)¹ at rich men's tables, with the savoury soup and messes steaming up the nostrils, and moistening the lips of the guests with desire and a distracted choice, I have felt the introduction of that ceremony to be unseasonable. With the ravenous orgasm² upon you, it seems impertinent to interpose a religious sentiment. It is a confusion of purpose to mutter out praises from a mouth that waters. The heats of epicurism put out the gentle flame of devotion. The incense which rises round is pagan, and the belly-god intercepts it for his own. The very excess of the provision beyond the needs, takes away all sense of proportion between the end and means. The giver is veiled by his gifts. You are startled at the injustice of returning thanks — for what? — for having too much, while so many starve. It is to praise the Gods amiss. 20

I have observed this awkwardness felt, scarce³ consciously perhaps, by the good man who says the grace.

¹ An uncommon guest.

² Moment of immoderate excitement; the word is an intentionally exaggerated description.

³ The *-ly* of the adverbial form is omitted, perhaps, because to use it would make two consecutive words end in *-ly*; but the omission is a frequent poetic license, and quite suitable to Lamb's usage in language. Cf. p. 61, l. 25.

I have seen it in clergymen and others — a sort of shame — a sense of the co-presence of circumstances which unhallow the blessing. After a devotional tone put on for a few seconds, how rapidly the speaker will fall into his common voice, helping himself or his neighbour, as if to get rid of some uneasy sensation of hypocrisy. Not that the good man was a hypocrite, or was not most conscientious in the discharge of the duty; but he felt in his inmost mind the incompatibility of the scene and the viands before him with the exercise of a calm and rational gratitude.

I hear somebody exclaim, — Would you have Christians sit down at table, like hogs to their troughs, without remembering the Giver? — no — I would have them sit down as Christians, remembering the Giver, and less like hogs. Or if their appetites must run riot, and they must pamper themselves with delicacies for which east and west are ransacked, I would have them postpone their benediction to a fitter season, when appetite is laid; when the still small voice can be heard, and the reason of the grace returns — with temperate diet and restricted dishes. Gluttony and surfeiting are no proper occasions for thanksgiving. When Jeshurun waxed fat, we read that he kicked. Virgil knew the harpy-nature better, when he put into the mouth of Celaeno anything but a blessing. We may be gratefully sensible of the deliciousness of some kinds of food beyond others, though that is a meaner and inferior gratitude: but the proper object of the grace is sustenance, not relishes; daily bread, not delicacies; the means of life, and not the means of pam-

pering the carcass. With what frame or composure, I wonder, can a city chaplain pronounce his benediction at some great Hall feast, when he knows that his last concluding pious word — and that, in all probability, the sacred name which he preaches — is but the signal for so many impatient harpies to commence their foul orgies, with as little sense of true thankfulness (which is temperance) as those Virgilian fowl ! It is well if the good man himself does not feel his devotions a little clouded, those foggy sensuous steams mingling with and polluting the pure altar sacrifice.

The severest satire upon full tables and surfeits is the banquet which Satan, in the *Paradise Regained*, provides for a temptation in the wilderness :

A table richly spread in regal mode,	15
With dishes piled, and meats of noblest sort	
And savour; beasts of chase, or fowl of game,	
In pastry built, or from the spit, or boiled,	
Gris-amber-steamed; all fish from sea or shore,	
Freshet or purling brook, for which was drained	20
Pontus, and Lucrine bay, and Afric coast.	

The Tempter, I warrant you, thought these cates would go down without the recommendatory preface of a benediction. They are like to be short graces where the devil plays the host. — I am afraid the poet wants his usual decorum in this place. Was he thinking of the old Roman luxury, or of a gandy-day at Cambridge ? This was a temptation fitter for a Heliogabalus. The whole banquet

is too civic and culinary, and the accompaniments altogether a profanation of that deep, abstracted, holy scene. The mighty artillery of sauces, which the cook-fiend conjures up, is out of proportion to the simple wants and
 5 plain hunger of the guest. He that disturbed him in his dreams, from his dreams might have been taught better. To the temperate fantasies of the famished Son of God, what sort of feasts presented themselves?—He dreamed indeed,

10 — As appetite is wont to dream,
 Of meats and drinks, nature's refreshment sweet.

But what meats?—

Him thought, he by the brook of Cherith stood,
 And saw the ravens with their horny beaks
 15 Food to Elijah bringing, even and morn;
 Though ravenous, taught to abstain from what they brought:
 He saw the prophet also how he fled
 Into the desert, and how there he slept
 Under a juniper; then how awaked
 20 He found his supper on the coals prepared,
 And by the angel was bid rise and eat,
 And ate the second time after repose,
 The strength whereof sufficed him forty days:
 Sometimes, that with Elijah he partook,
 25 Or as a guest with Daniel at his pulse.

Nothing in Milton is finer fancied than these temperate dreams of the divine Hungerer. To which of these two visionary banquets, think you, would the introduction of

what is called the grace have been the most fitting and pertinent ?

Theoretically I am no enemy to graces ; but practically I own that (before meat especially) they seem to involve something awkward and unseasonable. Our appetites, of one or another kind, are excellent spurs to our reason, which might otherwise but feebly set about the great ends of preserving and continuing the species. They are fit blessings to be contemplated at a distance with a becoming gratitude ; but the moment of appetite (the judicious reader will apprehend me) is, perhaps, the least fit season for that exercise. The Quakers who go about their business, of every description, with more calmness than we, have more title to the use of these benedictory prefaces. I have always admired their silent grace, and the more because I have observed their applications to the meat and drink following to be less passionate and sensual than ours. They are neither gluttons nor wine-bibbers as a people. They eat, as a horse bolts his chopped hay, with indifference, calmness, and cleanly circumstances. They neither grease nor slop themselves. When I see a citizen in his bib and tucker, I cannot imagine it a surplice.

I am no Quaker at my food. I confess I am not indifferent to the kinds of it. Those unctuous morsels of deer's flesh were not made to be received with dispassionate services. I hate a man who swallows it, affecting not to know what he is eating. I suspect his taste in higher matters. I shrink instinctively from one who pro-

fesses to like minced veal. There is a physiognomical character in the tastes for food. C——¹ holds that a man cannot have a pure mind who refuses apple-dumplings. I am not certain but he is right. With the decay of my
5 first innocence, I confess a less and less relish daily for those innocuous cates. The whole vegetable tribe have lost their gust with me. Only I stick to asparagus, which still seems to inspire gentle thoughts. I am impatient and querulous under culinary disappointments, as to come
10 home at the dinner hour, for instance, expecting some savoury mess, and to find one quite tasteless and sapidless. Butter ill melted — that commonest of kitchen failures — puts me beside my tenor. — The author of the Rambler used to make inarticulate animal noises over a favourite
15 food. Was this the music quite proper to be preceded by the grace? or would the pious man have done better to postpone his devotions to a season when the blessing might be contemplated with less perturbation? I quarrel with no man's tastes, nor would set my thin face
20 against those excellent things, in their way, jollity and feasting. But as these exercises, however laudable, have little in them of grace or gracefulness, a man should be sure, before he ventures so to grace them, that while he is pretending his devotions elsewhere, he is not secretly
25 kissing his hand to some great fish — his Dagon — with a special consecration of no ark but the fat tureen before him. Graces are the sweet preluding strains to the banquets of angels and children ; to the roots and severer

¹ Coleridge: but it sounds more like Lamb himself.

repasts of the Chartreuse ; to the slender, but not slenderly acknowledged, refection of the poor and humble man : but at the heaped-up boards of the pampered and the luxurious they become of dissonant mood, less timed and tuned to the occasion, methinks, than the noise of those better befitting organs would be, which children hear tales of, at Hog's Norton. We sit too long at our meals, or are too curious in the study of them, or too disordered in our application to them, or engross too great a portion of those good things (which should be 10 common) to our share, to be able with any grace to say grace.¹ To be thankful for what we grasp exceeding our proportion is to add hypocrisy to injustice. A lurking sense of this truth is what makes the performance of this duty so cold and spiritless a service at most tables. In 15 houses where the grace is as indispensable as the napkin, who has not seen that never settled question arise, as to *who shall say it*; while the good man of the house and the visitor clergyman, or some other guest belike of next authority from years or gravity, shall be bandying about 20 the office between them as a matter of compliment, each of them not unwilling to shift the awkward burden of an equivocal duty from his own shoulders?

I once drank tea in company with two Methodist divines of different persuasions, whom it was my fortune 25

¹ The double sense in which Lamb here uses the word *grace* will remind the reader that throughout the essay he has had in mind the needed congruity between *grace* and *gracefulness* (see line 22 on preceding page, and p. 128, l. 12).

to introduce to each other for the first time that evening. Before the first cup was handed round, one of these reverend gentlemen put it to the other, with all due solemnity, whether he choose to *say anything*. It seems
 5 it is the custom with some sectaries to put up a short prayer before this meal also. His reverend brother did not at first quite apprehend him, but upon an explanation, with little less importance he made answer, that it was not a custom known in his church: in which court-
 10 teous evasion the other acquiescing for good manner's sake, or in compliance with a weak brother, the supplementary or tea-grace was waived altogether. With what spirit might not Lucian have painted two priests, of *his* religion, playing into each other's hands the compliment
 15 of performing or omitting a sacrifice, — the hungry God meantime, doubtful of his incense, with expectant nostrils hovering over the two flamens, and (as between two stools) going away in the end without his supper.

A short form upon these occasions is felt to want reverence; a long one, I am afraid, cannot escape the charge of impertinence. I do not quite approve of the epigrammatic conciseness with which that equivocal wag (but my pleasant school-fellow) C. V. L.,¹ when importuned for a grace, used to inquire, first slyly leering down the table,
 25 "Is there no clergyman here?" — significantly adding, "Thank G——." Nor do I think our old form at school quite pertinent, where we were used to preface our bald bread and cheese suppers with a preamble, connecting

¹ Charles Valentine Le Grice; see p. 40, l. 1.

with that humble blessing a recognition of benefits the most awful and overwhelming to the imagination which religion has to offer. *Non tunc illis erat locus*.¹ I remember we were put to it to reconcile the phrase "good creatures," upon which the blessing rested, with the fare set before us, wilfully understanding that expression in a low and animal sense, — till some one recalled a legend, which told how in the golden days of Christ's,² the young Hospitallers were wont to have smoking joints of roast meat upon their nightly boards, till some pious benefactor, commiserating the decencies, rather than the palates, of the children, commuted our flesh for garments, and gave us — *horresco referens*³ — trousers instead of mutton.

¹ "That was not the occasion for such things." — Quotation (somewhat changed) from Horace's *Ars Poetica*, 19.

² That is, Christ's Hospital, his old school.

³ "I tremble at the recollection." — Virgil's *Aeneid*, II, 204.

A DISSERTATION UPON ROAST PIG

MANKIND, says a Chinese manuscript, which my friend M.² was obliging enough to read and explain to me, for the first seventy thousand ages ate their meat raw, clawing or biting it from the living animal, just as they do in Abyssinia to this day. This period is not obscurely hinted at by their great Confucius in the second chapter of his Mundane Mutations, where he designates a kind of golden age by the term Cho-fang, literally the Cooks' holiday. The manuscript goes on to say, that the art of roasting, or rather broiling (which I take to be the elder brother) was accidentally discovered in the manner following. The swineherd, Ho-ti, having gone out into the woods one morning, as his manner was, to collect rust¹ for his frogs, left his cottage in the care of his eldest son Bo-bo, a great lubberly boy, who being fond of playing with fire, as youngsters of his age commonly are, let some sparks escape into a bundle of straw, which kindling quickly, spread the conflagration over every part of their poor mansion, till it was reduced to ashes. Together with the cottage (a sorry antediluvian makeshift of a building, you may think it), what was of much more importance, a fine litter of new-farrowed pigs, no less than nine in number, perished. China pigs have been esteemed a luxury all over the East from the remotest periods that we read of. Bo-bo was in the utmost con-

¹ Mannung.

² Herch-nuts or acorns.

sternation, as you may think, not so much for the sake of the tenement, which his father and he could easily build up again with a few dry branches, and the labour of an hour or two, at any time, as for the loss of the pigs. While he was thinking what he should say to his father, 5 and wringing his hands over the smoking remnants of one of those untimely sufferers, an odour assailed his nostrils, unlike any scent which he had before experienced. What could it proceed from?—not from the burnt cottage—he had smelt that smell before—indeed this was 10 by no means the first accident of the kind which had occurred through the negligence of this unlucky young fire-brand. Much less did it resemble that of any known herb, weed, or flower. A premonitory moistening at the same time overflowed his nether lip. He knew not what to 15 think. He next stooped down to feel the pig, if there were any signs of life in it. He burnt his fingers, and to cool them he applied them in his booby fashion to his mouth. Some of the crumbs of the scorched skin had come away with his fingers, and for the first time in his life (in the 20 world's life indeed, for before him no man had known it) he tasted—*crackling*! ¹ Again he felt and fumbled at the pig. It did not burn him so much now, still he licked his fingers from a sort of habit. The truth at length broke into his slow understanding, that it was the pig that 25 smelt so, and the pig that tasted so delicious; and, sur-

¹ A name common in England for the browned skin of a roast pig; in the plural it is used in America to name the scraps left after the fat has been tried out, in making lard.

rendering himself up to the new-born pleasure, he fell to tearing up whole handfuls of the scorched skin with the flesh next it, and was cramming it down his throat in his beastly fashion, when his sire entered amid the smoking
5 rafters, armed with retributory cudgel, and finding how affairs stood, began to rain blows upon the young rogue's shoulders, as thick as hailstones, which Bo-bo heeded not any more than if they had been flies. The tickling pleasure, which he experienced in his lower regions, had
10 rendered him quite callous to any inconveniences he might feel in those remote quarters. His father might lay on, but he could not beat him from his pig, till he had fairly made an end of it, when, becoming a little more sensible of his situation, something like the following
15 dialogue ensued.

"You graceless whelp, what have you got there devouring? Is it not enough that you have burnt me down three houses with your dog's tricks, and be hanged to you, but you must be eating fire, and I know not what — what have
20 you got there, I say?"

"O father, the pig, the pig, do come and taste how nice the burnt pig eats."¹

The ears of Ho-ti tingled with horror. He cursed his son, and he cursed himself that ever he should beget a
25 son that should eat burnt pig.

Bo-bo, whose scent was wonderfully sharpened since morning, soon raked out another pig, and fairly rending it asunder, thrust the lesser half by main force into the

¹ Colloquial usage, in the sense of taste, relish.

A Dissertation upon Roast Pig 141

fists of Ho-ti, still shouting out "Eat, eat, eat the burnt pig, father, only taste — O Lord," — with such like barbarous ejaculations, cramming all the while as if he would choke.

Ho-ti trembled in every joint while he grasped the ⁵ abominable thing, wavering whether he should not put his son to death for an unnatural young monster, when the crackling scorching his fingers, as it had done his son's, and applying the same remedy to them, he in his turn tasted some of its flavour, which, make what sour ¹⁰ mouths he would for a pretence, proved not altogether displeasing to him. In conclusion (for the manuscript here is a little tedious) both father and son fairly sat down to the mess, and never left off till they had dispatched all that remained of the litter. ¹⁵

Bo-ho was strictly enjoined not to let the secret escape, for the neighbours would certainly have stoned them for a couple of abominable wretches, who could think of improving upon the good meat which God had sent them. Nevertheless, strange stories got about. It was observed ²⁰ that Ho-ti's cottage was burnt down now more frequently than ever. Nothing but fires from this time forward. Some would break out in broad day, others in the night-time. As often as the sow farrowed, so sure was the house of Ho-ti to be in a blaze; and Ho-ti himself, which ²⁵ was the more remarkable, instead of chastising his son, seemed to grow more indulgent to him than ever. At length they were watched, the terrible mystery discovered, and father and son summoned to take their trial at Peking,

then an inconsiderable assize town. Evidence was given, the obnoxious food itself produced in court, and verdict about to be pronounced, when the foreman of the jury begged that some of the burnt pig, of which the culprits stood accused, might be handed into the box. He handled it, and they all handled it, and burning their fingers, as Bo-bo and his father had done before them, and nature prompting to each of them the same remedy, against the face of all the facts, and the clearest charge which judge had ever given,—to the surprise of the whole court, townsfolk, strangers, reporters, and all present—without leaving the box, or any manner of consultation whatever, they brought in a simultaneous verdict of Not Guilty.

The judge, who was a shrewd fellow, winked at the manifest iniquity of the decision: and, when the court was dismissed, went privily, and bought up all the pigs that could be had for love or money. In a few days his Lordship's town-house was observed to be on fire. The thing took wing, and now there was nothing to be seen but fires in every direction. Fuel and pigs grew enormously dear all over the district. The insurance offices one and all shut up shop. People built slighter and slighter every day, until it was feared that the very science of architecture would in no long time be lost to the world. Thus this custom of firing houses continued, till in process of time, says my manuscript, a sage arose, like our Locke, who made a discovery, that the flesh of swine, or indeed of any other animal, might be cooked

(*burnt*, as they called it) without the necessity of consuming a whole house to dress it. Then first began the rude form of a gridiron. Roasting by the string, or spit, came in a century or two later, I forget in whose dynasty. By such slow degrees, concludes the manuscript, do the most useful, and seemingly the most obvious arts, make their way among mankind. —

Without placing too implicit faith in the account above given, it must be agreed, that if a worthy pretext for so dangerous an experiment as setting houses on fire (especially in these days) could be assigned in favour of any culinary object, that pretext and excuse might be found in ROAST PIG.

Of all the delicacies in the whole *mundus edibilis*, I will maintain it to be the most delicate — *princeps* ¹⁸ *olusiorum*.¹

I speak not of your grown porkers — things between pig and pork — those hobbledchoys² — but a young and tender suckling — under a moon old — guiltless as yet of the sty — with no original speck of the *amor immunditatis*,³ ²⁰ the hereditary tainting of the first parent, yet manifest — his voice as yet not broken, but something between a

¹ The Latin words are so incorporated with the English that it will be best to write the whole sentence: "Of all the delicacies in the whole world of things to eat, I will maintain it to be the most delicate, — the chief of tidbits."

² A name usually given to one in the raw, unformed, awkward age between youth and manhood.

³ Love of dirt. Lamb here speaks playfully as if pigs were fallen beings like mankind, and as if their original sin were love of dirt.

childish treble, and a grumble — the mild forerunner, or *praeludium*,¹ of a grunt.

He must be roasted. I am not ignorant that our ancestors ate them seethed,² or boiled — but what a sacrifice of the exterior tegument!

There is no flavour comparable, I will contend, to that of the crisp, tawny, well-watched, not over-roasted, *crackling*, as it is well called — the very teeth are invited to their share of the pleasure at this banquet in overcoming the
 10 coy, brittle resistance — with the adhesive oleaginous — O call it not fat — but an indefinable sweetness growing up to it — the tender blossoming of fat — fat cropped in the bud — taken in the shoot — in the first innocence — the cream and quintessence of the child-pig's yet pure food —
 15 the lean, no lean, but a kind of animal manna — or, rather, fat and lean (if it must be so) so blended and running into each other, that both together make but one ambrosian result, or common substance.

Behold him, while he is doing — it seemeth³ rather
 20 a refreshing warmth, than a scorching heat, that he is so passive to. How equably he twirleth round the string! — Now he is just done. To see the extreme sensibility of that tender age, he hath wept out his pretty eyes — radiant jellies — shooting-stars —

¹ Prelude, or first element.

² Lamb uses here first the old word, such as the ancestors used; then defines it in a modern term.

³ Observe how, in the descriptive passage succeeding, Lamb lapses into the old form of the verbs; it is his whimsical way of decking out a commonplace subject with elaborate language.

A Dissertation upon Roast Pig 145

See him in the dish, his second cradle, how meek he lieth! — wouldst thou have had this innocent grow up to the grossness and infelicity which too often accompany maturer swinehood? Ten to one he would have proved a glutton, a sloven, an obstinate, disagreeable animal — wallowing in all manner of filthy conversation — from these sins he is happily snatched away —

Ere sin could light, or sorrow fade,
Death came with timely care —

his memory is odoriferous — no clown curseth, while his stomach half rejecteth, the rank bacon — no coal-heaver boltern him in reeking sausages — he hath a fair sepulchre in the grateful stomach of the judicious epicure — and for such a tomb ought he content to die.

He is the best of Saviors. Pine-apple is great. She is indeed almost too transcendent — a delight, if not sinful, yet so like to sinning, that really a tender-conscienced person would do well to pause — too ravishing for mortal taste, she woundeth and excotheteth the lips that approach her — like lovers' kisses, she biteth — she is a pleasure bordering on pain from the fierceness and insanity of her relish — but she stoppeth at the palate — she meddeth not with the appetite — and the coarsest hunger might barter her consistently for a mutton-chop.

Pig — let me speak his praise — is no less provocative of the appetite, than he is satisfactory to the criticalness of the censorious palate. The strong man may batten on him, and the weakling refugeth not his mild juices.

Unlike to mankind's mixed characters, a bundle of virtues and vices, inexplicably intertwined, and not to be unravelled without hazard, he is — good throughout. No part of him is better or worse than another. He helpeth, 5 as far as his little means extend, all around. He is the least envious of banquets. He is all neighbours' fare.

I am one of those, who freely and ungrudgingly impart a share of the good things of this life which fall to their lot (few as mine are in this kind) to a friend. I protest I 10 take as great an interest in my friend's pleasures, his relishes, and proper satisfactions, as in mine own. "Presents," I often say, "endear Absents." Hares, pheasants, partridges, snipes, barn-door chicken (those "tame villatic fowl"), capons, plovers, brawn, barrels of 15 oysters, I dispense as freely as I receive them. I love to taste them, as it were, upon the tongue of my friend. But a stop must be put somewhere. One would not, like Lear, "give everything." I make my stand upon pig. Methinks it is an ingratitude to the Giver of all good 20 flavours, to extra-domiciliate, or send out of the house, slightly, (under pretext of friendship, or I know not what) a blessing so particularly adapted, predestined, I may say, to my individual palate — It argues an insensibility.

25 I remember a touch of conscience in this kind at school. My good old aunt, who never parted from me at the end of a holiday without stuffing a sweetmeat, or some nice thing, into my pocket, had dismissed me one evening with a smoking plum-cake, fresh from the oven. In my way

to school (it was over London Bridge) a grey-headed old beggar saluted me (I have no doubt at this time of day, that he was a counterfeit). I had no pence to console him with, and in the vanity of self-denial, and the very coxcomby of charity, school-boy-like, I made him a present of—the whole cake! I walked on a little, buoyed up, as one is on such occasions, with a sweet soothing of self-satisfaction; but before I had got to the end of the bridge, my better feelings returned, and I burst into tears, thinking how ungrateful I had been to my good aunt, to go and give her good gift away to a stranger, that I had never seen before, and who might be a bad man for aught I knew; and then I thought of the pleasure my aunt would be taking in thinking that I — I myself, and not another — would eat her nice cake — and what should I say to her the next time I saw her — how naughty I was to part with her pretty present — and the odour of that spicy cake came back upon my recollection, and the pleasure and the curiosity I had taken in seeing her make it, and her joy when she sent it to the oven, and how disappointed she would feel that I had never had a bit of it in my mouth at last — and I blamed my impertinent spirit of alms-giving, and out-of-place hypocrisy of goodness, and above all I wished never to see the face again of that insidious, good-for-nothing, old grey impostor. 25

Our ancestors were nice in their method of sacrificing these tender victims. We read of pigs whipped to death with something of a shock, as we hear of any other obsolete custom. The age of discipline is gone by, or it

would be curious to inquire (in a philosophical light merely) what effect this process might have towards intensifying and *dulcifying*¹ a substance, naturally so mild and *dulcet* as the flesh of young pigs. It looks like refining a violet. Yet we should be cautious, while we condemn the inhumanity, how we censure the wisdom of the practice. It might impart a *gusto* —²

I remember an hypothesis, argued upon by the young students, when I was at St. Omer's, and maintained with much learning and pleasantry on both sides, "Whether, supposing that the flavour of a pig who obtained his death by whipping (*per flagellationem extremam*)³ superadded a pleasure upon the palate of a man more intense than any possible suffering we can conceive in the animal, is man justified in using that method of putting the animal to death?" I forget the decision.

His sauce should be considered. Decidedly, a few bread-crumbs, done up with his liver and brains, and a dash of mild sage. But, banish, dear Mrs. Cook, I beseech you, the whole onion tribe. Barbecue your whole hogs to your palate, steep them in shalots, stuff them out with plantations of the rank and guilty garlic; you cannot poison them, or make them stronger than they are — but consider, he is a weakling — a flower.

¹ These two quaint words are virtually defined by the words *mild* and *dulcet* in the following line, making more tender and sweet.

² That is, a delicate refinement of taste.

³ Lamb uses the Latin equivalent of *death by whipping* to intimate that the debate was conducted in Latin.

THE PRAISE OF CHIMNEY-SWEEPERS

I LIKE to meet a sweep — understand me — not a grown sweeper — old chimney-sweepers are by no means attractive — but one of those tender novices, blooming through their first nigritude, the maternal washings not quite effaced from the cheek — such as come forth with the dawn, or somewhat earlier, with their little professional notes sounding like the *peep peep* of a young sparrow; or liker to the matin lark should I pronounce them, in their aerial ascents not seldom anticipating the sunrise?

I have a kindly yearning towards these dim specks — 10
poor blots — innocent blacknesses —

I reverence these young Africans of our own growth¹ — these almost clergy imps, who sport their cloth without assumption; and from their little pulpits (the tops of chimneys), in the nipping air of a December morning, 15
preach a lesson of patience to mankind.

When a child, what a mysterious pleasure it was to witness their operation! to see a chit no bigger than one's self enter, one knew not by what process, into what seemed the *fauces Avernæ*² — to pursue him in imagination, as he went sounding on through so many dark stifling caverns, horrid shades! — to shudder with the idea

¹ Here Lamb seems to use the word *growth*, in his quaint fashion as almost equivalent to *race* or *species*.

² "The jaws of hell," phrase from Virgil's *Æneid*, VI, 201.

that "now, surely, he must be lost forever!" — to revive at hearing his feeble shout of discovered daylight — and then (O fullness of delight) running out of doors, to come just in time to see the sable phenomenon emerge in safety, the brandished weapon of his art victorious like some flag waved over a conquered citadel! I seem to remember having been told, that a bad sweep was once left in a stack with his brush, to indicate which way the wind blew. It was an awful spectacle certainly; not much unlike the old stage direction in *Macbeth*, where the "Apparition of a child crowned with a tree in his hand rises."

Reader, if thou meetest one of these small gentry in thy early rambles, it is good to give him a penny. It is better to give him twopence. If it be starving weather, and to the proper troubles of his hard occupation, a pair of kibed¹ heels (no unusual accompaniment) be super-added, the demand on thy humanity will surely rise to a tester.²

There is a composition, the groundwork of which I have understood to be the sweet wood yclept sassafras. This wood boiled down to a kind of tea, and tempered with an infusion of milk and sugar, hath to some tastes a delicacy beyond the China luxury. I know not how thy palate may relish it; for myself, with every deference to the judicious Mr. Read, who hath time out of mind kept open a shop (the only one he avers in London) for the vending of this "wholesome and pleasant beverage," on

¹ Chapped or chilblained.

² In modern slang a sixpence.

the south side of Fleet Street, as thou approachest Bridge Street — *the only Salsopian¹ house*, — I have never yet adventured to dip my own particular lip in a basin of his commended ingredients — a cautious premonition to the olfactory constantly whispering to me, that my stomachs must infallibly, with all due courtesy, decline it. Yet I have seen palates, otherwise not uninstructed in dietetical elegancies, sup it up with avidity.

I know not by what particular conformation of the organ it happens, but I have always found that this composition is surprisingly gratifying to the palate of a young chimney-sweeper — whether the oily particles (sassafras is slightly oleaginous) do attenuate and soften the fuliginous concretions, which are sometimes found (in dissections) to adhere to the roof of the mouth in these unledged practitioners; or whether Nature, sensible that she had mingled too much of bitter wood in the lot of these raw victims, caused to grow out of the earth her sassafras for a sweet lenitive — but so it is, that no possible taste or odour to the senses of a young chimney-sweeper can convey a delicate excitement comparable to this mixture. Being penniless, they will yet hang their black heads over the ascending steam, to gratify one sense if possible, seemingly no less pleased than those domestic animals — cats — when they purr over a new-found sprig of valerian. There is something more in these sympathies than philosophy can inculcate.

Now albeit Mr. Read hoisteth, not without reason, that

¹ The name given to sassafras tea was *salsopian*, or *salsapilla*.

his is the *only Salopian house*; yet be it known to thee, Reader — if thou art one who keepest what are called good hours, thou art haply ignorant of the fact — he hath a race of industrious imitators, who from stalls, and under
5 open sky, dispense the same savoury mess to humbler customers, at that dead time of the dawn, when (as extremes meet) the rake, reeling home from his midnight cups, and the hard-handed artisan leaving his bed to resume the premature labours of the day, jostle, not unfrequently
10 to the manifest disconcerting of the former, for the honours of the pavement. It is the time when, in summer, between the expired and the not yet relumined kitchen-fires, the kennels of our fair metropolis give forth their least satisfactory odours. The rake, who wisheth to dissipate his
15 o'ernight vapours in more grateful coffee, curses the ungenial fume, as he passeth; but the artisan stops to taste, and blesses the fragrant breakfast.

This is *Sallop* — the precocious herb-woman's darling — the delight of the early gardener, who transports his smok
20 ing cabbages by break of day from Hammersmith to Covent Garden's famed piazzas — the delight, and, oh I fear, too often the envy, of the unpennied sweep. Him shouldest thou haply encounter, with his dim visage pendent over the grateful steam, regale him with a sumptuous basin (it
25 will cost thee but three halfpennies) and a slice of delicate bread and butter (an added halfpenny) — so may thy culinary fires, eased of the o'ercharged secretions from thy worse-placed hospitalities, curl up a lighter volume to the welkin — so may the descending soot never taint thy

The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers 153

costly well-ingre-lieuced soups — nor the odious cry, quick-reaching from street to street, of the *fired chimney*, invite the rattling engines from ten adjacent parishes, to disturb for a casual scintillation thy peace and pocket!

I am by nature extremely susceptible of street affronts; 5 the jeers and taunts of the populace; the low-bred triumph they display over the casual trip, or splashed stocking, of a gentleman. Yet can I endure the jocularity of a young sweep with something more than forgiveness. — In the last winter but one, pacing along Cheapside with my accus- 10 tomed precipitation when I walk westward, a treacherous slide brought me upon my back in an instant. I scrambled up with pain and shame enough — yet outwardly trying to face it down, as if nothing had happened — when the rogulsh grin of one of these young wits encountered me. 15 There he stood, pointing me out with his dusky finger to the mob, and to a poor woman (I suppose his mother) in particular, till the tears for the exquisiteness of the fun (so he thought it) worked themselves out at the corners of his poor red eyes, red from many a previous weeping, 20 and soot-inflamed, yet twinkling through all with such a joy, snatched out of desolation, that Hogarth — but Hogarth has got him already (how could he miss him?) in the March to Finchley, grinning at the pie-man — there he stood, as he stands in the picture, irremovable, as if the 25 jest was to last forever — with such a maximum of glee, and minimum of mischief, in his mirth — for the grin of a genuine sweep hath absolutely no malice in it — that I could have been content, if the honour of a gentleman

might endure it, so have remained on this and the
 moorery all my days.

I am the more attached to the neighbourhood in which
 we called a home of rest. Every part of me, and the
 bones and joints and a risked, you would say, of
 such work. But, perhaps, they should also learn to
 "as" men as long as possible. The feeling, of the
 present, we know we then best, that we know
 yet more I cannot, out from the mouth of a true story
 a simple (not to mention) of those who and who
 conditions makes me as an agreeable company, a man
 and an allowable piece of happen. It is a story

A more about

There has been much talk of the night.

It is like some remnant of genius not quite extinct, a
 badge of better days, a hint of better things — and, doubtless,
 under the obdurate darkness and dreary night of the
 future, the remnant, about which lurks good blood and
 gentle conditions derived from the present, and a kind of
 "politeness." The present, apprehensions of these things
 do not give but too much encouragement. I have, in
 character, and almost infinite abstractions, the whole of
 country and the country, so often described in these
 young years (not otherwise to be accounted for) plus,
 as it were, some kind of abstractions; many noble pictures
 appearing for their own sake, even in the days of the
 the last, the days of the present, and the days of the
 the last, and the days of the present, and the days of the

The Prince of Chimney-Sweepers 155

but a solitary instance of good fortune, out of many misfortune and mispent opportunities.²

In one of the state-beds at Windsor Castle, a few years since — or a few days since — (that west of the Howards is an object of curiosity to many, chiefly for its bed, in which the late Duke was especially a connoisseur) — enclosed with curtains of delicate crimson, with heavy crimson cushions — folded between a pair of sheets white and softer than the lap where Isaac built Abraham — was discovered by chance, after all methods of search had been tried, at Windsor, last winter, a rare chimney-sweeper. The little creature, having somehow contrived his passage among the intricacies of some lordly chimney, by some unknown aperture had alighted upon this magnificent cushion, and, used with his solemn explanation, it was waste to refuse the delicate movement to repose, which he there can exhibit; so, creeping between the covers very quietly, laid his black head upon the pillow, and slept like a young Howard.

Such is the account given to the visitors at the Castle. — No doubt I cannot help wishing to perceive a confirmation of what I have just heard as in the story. A sign instance now at work in the case, or I am mistaken. Is it probable that a poor child of that description, with whatever necessities he might be visited, would have ventured, under such a penalty, as he would be taught to expect, to uncover the secrets of a Duke's bed, and deliberately to lay

² It is not unlikely that Isaac could find rare work himself, attending the movements of a child from its parent.

himself down between them, when the rug, or the carpet, presented an obvious couch, still far above his pretensions — is this probable, I would ask, if the great power of nature, which I contend for, had not been manifested within him, prompting to the adventure? Doubtless this young nobleman (for such my mind misgives me that he must be) was allured by some memory, not amounting to full consciousness, of his condition in infancy, when he was used to be lapped by his mother, or his nurse, in just such sheets as he there found, into which he was now but creeping back as into his proper *incunabula*,¹ and resting-place. — By no other theory, than by this sentiment of a pre-existent state (as I may call it), can I explain a deed so venturous, and, indeed, upon any other system, so indecorous, in this tender, but unseasonable, sleeper.

My pleasant friend JEM WHITE was so impressed with a belief of metamorphoses like this frequently taking place, that in some sort to reverse the wrongs of fortune in these poor changelings, he instituted an annual feast of chimney-sweepers, at which it was his pleasure to officiate as host and waiter. It was a solemn supper held in Smithfield, upon the yearly return of the fair of St. Bartholomew. Cards were issued a week before to the master-sweeps in and about the metropolis, confining the invitation to their younger fry. Now and then an elderly stripling would get in among us, and be good-naturedly winked at; but our main body were infantry.² One un-

¹ Cradle. Originally a neuter plural, meaning swaddling-clothes.

² A play on the word *infant*, to fit the military term *main body*.

fortunate wight, indeed, who, relying upon his dusky suit, had intruded himself into our party, but by tokens was providentially discovered in time to be no chimney-sweeper (all is not soot which looks so),¹ was quoited² out of the presence with universal indignation, as not having on the wedding garment; but in general the greatest harmony prevailed. The place chosen was a convenient spot among the pens, at the north side of the fair, not so far distant as to be impervious to the agreeable hubbub of that vanity;³ but remote enough not to be obvious to the interruption of every gaping spectator in it. The guests assembled about seven. In those little temporary parlours three tables were spread with napery, not so fine as substantial, and at every board a comely hostess presided with her pan of hissing sausages. The nostrils of the young rogues dilated at the savour. JAMES WHITE, as head waiter, had charge of the first table; and myself, with our trusty companion BIGOD, ordinarily ministered to the other two. There was clambering and jostling, you may be sure, who should get at the first table — for Rochester in his maddest days could not have done the humours of the scene with more spirit than my friend. After some general expression of thanks for the honour the company had done him, his inaugural ceremony was to clasp the greasy

¹ A similar parody of the proverb, "All is not gold that glitters."

² Thrown as a quoit; the word used to connote the rough and unceremonious nature of the act.

³ This word is used in allusion to Bunyan's *Vanity Fair* (in *The Pilgrim's Progress*), to connote the insignificance of things in the fair.

waist of old dame Ursula (the fattest of the three), that stood frying and fretting, half-blessing, half-cursing "the gentleman," and imprint upon her chaste lips a tender salute, whereat the universal host would set up a shout
5 that tore the concave, while hundreds of grinning teeth startled the night with their brightness. O it was a pleasure to see the sable younkers lick in the unctuous meat, with *his* more unctuous sayings — how he would fit the tid-bits to the puny mouths, reserving the lengthier links for
10 the seniors — how he would intercept a morsel even in the jaws of some young desperado, declaring it "must to the pan again to be browned, for it was not fit for a gentleman's eating" — how he would recommend this slice of white bread, or that piece of kissing-crust, to a tender
15 juvenile, advising them all to have a care of cracking their teeth, which were their best patrimony, — how genteelly he would deal about the small ale, as if it were wine, naming the brewer, and protesting, if it were not good, he should lose their custom; with a special recommendation to
20 wipe the lip before drinking. Then we had our toasts — "The King," — the "Cloth," — which, whether they understood or not, was equally diverting and flattering; — and for a crowning sentiment, which never failed, "May the Brush supersede the Laurel!" All these, and fifty other
25 fancies, which were rather felt than comprehended by his guests, would he utter, standing upon tables, and prefacing every sentiment with a "Gentlemen, give me leave to propose so and so," which was a prodigious comfort to those young orphans; every now and then stuffing into his mouth

The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers 159

(for it did not do to be squeamish on these occasions) indiscriminate pieces of those reeking sausages, which pleased them mightily, and was the savouriest part, you may believe, of the entertainment.

Golden lads and lasses must, 5
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust —

JAMES WHITE is extinct, and with him these suppers have long ceased. He carried away with him half the fun of the world when he died — of my world at least. His old clients look for him among the pens; and, missing 10 him, reproach the altered feast of St. Bartholomew, and the glory of Smithfield departed forever.

DREAM-CHILDREN ; A REVERIE

CHILDREN love to listen to stories about their elders, when *they* were children ; to stretch their imagination to the conception of a traditionary great-uncle, or grandame, whom they never saw. It was in this spirit that my little ones crept about me the other evening to hear about their great-grandmother Field, who lived in a great house in Norfolk (a hundred times bigger than that in which they and papa lived) which had been the scene—so at least it was generally believed in that part of the country—of the tragic incidents which they had lately become familiar with from the ballad of the Children in the Wood. Certain it is that the whole story of the children and their cruel uncle was to be seen fairly carved out in wood upon the chimney-piece of the great hall, the whole story down to the Robin Redbreasts, till a foolish rich person pulled it down to set up a marble one of modern invention in its stead, with no story upon it. Here Alice put out one of her dear mother's looks, too tender to be called upbraiding. Then I went on to say, how religious and how good their great-grandmother Field was, how beloved and respected by everybody, though she was not indeed the mistress of this great house, but had only the charge of it (and yet in some respects she might be said to be the mistress of it too) committed to her by the owner, who preferred living in a newer and more fashionable mansion which

he had purchased somewhere in the adjoining county ; but still she lived in it in a manner as if it had been her own, and kept up the dignity of the great house in a sort while she lived, which afterwards came to decay, and was nearly pulled down, and all its old ornaments stripped and carried away to the owner's other house, where they were set up, and looked as awkward as if some one were to carry away the old tombs they had seen lately at the Abbey, and stick them up in Lady C.'s tawdry gilt drawing room. Here John smiled, as much as to say, "that would be foolish indeed." And then I told how, when she came to die, her funeral was attended by a concourse of all the poor, and some of the gentry too, of the neighbourhood for many miles round, to show their respect for her memory, because she had been such a good and religious woman, so good indeed that she knew all the Psaltery¹ by heart, ay, and a great part of the Testament besides. Here little Alice spread her hands. Then I told what a tall, upright, graceful person their great-grandmother Field once was ; and how in her youth she was esteemed the best dancer — here Alice's little right foot played an involuntary movement, till, upon my looking grave, it desisted — the best dancer, I was saying, in the county, till a cruel disease, called a cancer, came, and bowed her down with pain ; but it could never bend her good spirits, or make them stoop, but they were still upright, because she was so good and religious. Then I

¹ The more usual form is *psalter*. The word *psaltery*, in the *bible*, designates a musical instrument.

told how she was used to sleep by herself in a lone chamber of the great lone house ; and how she believed that an apparition of two infants was to be seen at midnight gliding up and down the great staircase near where she slept, 5 but she said " those innocents would do her no harm ; " and how frightened I used to be, though in those days I had my maid to sleep with me, because I was never half so good or religious as she — and yet I never saw the infants. Here John expanded all his eyebrows and tried 10 to look courageous. Then I told how good she was to all her grandchildren, having us to the great house in the holidays, where I in particular used to spend many hours by myself, in gazing upon the old busts of the Twelve Cæsars, that had been Emperors of Rome, till the old 15 marble heads would seem to live again, or I to be turned into marble with them ; how I never could be tired with roaming about that huge mansion, with its vast empty rooms, with their worn-out hangings, fluttering tapestry, and carved oaken panels, with the gilding almost rubbed 20 out — sometimes in the spacious old-fashioned gardens, which I had almost to myself, unless when now and then a solitary gardening man would cross me — and how the nectarines and peaches hung upon the walls, without my ever offering to pluck them, because they were forbidden 25 fruit, unless now and then, — and because I had more pleasure in strolling about among the old melancholy-looking yew trees, or the firs, and picking up the red berries, and the fir apples, which were good for nothing but to look at — or in lying about upon the fresh grass, with

all the fine garden smells around me—or basking in the orangery, till I could almost fancy myself ripening too along with the oranges and the limes in that grateful warmth—or in watching the dace that darted to and fro in the fish-pond, at the bottom of the garden, with here and there, a great sulky pike hanging midway down the water in silent state, as if it mocked at their impertinent friskings,—I had more pleasure in these busy-idle diversions than in all the sweet flavours of peaches, nectarines, oranges, and such like common baits of children. Here John slyly deposited back upon the plate a bunch of grapes, which, not unobserved by Alice, he had meditated dividing with her, and both seemed willing to relinquish them for the present as irrelevant. Then in somewhat a more heightened tone, I told how, though their great-grand-
 mother Field loved all her grandchildren, yet in an espe-
 cial manner she might be said to love their uncle, John L—, because he was so handsome and spirited a youth, and a king to the rest of us; and, instead of moping about in solitary corners, like some of us, he would mount the
 most mettlesome horse he could get, when but an imp no
 bigger than themselves, and make it carry him half over
 the county in a morning, and join the hunters when
 there were any out—and yet he loved the old great
 house and gardens too, but had too much spirit to
 be always pent up within their boundaries—and
 how their uncle grew up to man's estate as brave as
 he was handsome, to the admiration of everybody, but
 of their great-grandmother Field most especially; and

how he used to carry me upon his back when I was a lame-footed boy — for he was a good bit older than me — many a mile when I could not walk for pain ; — and how in after life he became lame-footed too, and I did not always (I fear) make allowances enough for him when he was impatient, and in pain, nor remember sufficiently how considerate he had been to me when I was lame-footed ; and how when he died, though he had not been dead an hour, it seemed as if he had died a great while ago, such
10 a distance there is betwixt life and death ; and how I bore his death as I thought pretty well at first, but afterwards it haunted and haunted me ; and though I did not cry or take it to heart as some do, and as I think he would have done if I had died, yet I missed him all day long,
15 and knew not till then how much I had loved him. I missed his kindness, and I missed his crossness, and wished him to be alive again, to be quarrelling with him (for we quarrelled sometimes), rather than not have him again, and was as uneasy without him, as he their poor
20 uncle must have been when the doctor took off his limb. Here the children fell a crying, and asked if their little mourning which they had on was not for Uncle John, and they looked up, and prayed me not to go on about their uncle, but to tell them some stories about their
25 pretty dead mother. Then I told how for seven long years, in hope sometimes, sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W——n¹ ; and, as much as children could understand, I explained to them

¹ This name, according to Lamb, was feigned.

what coyness, and diffculty, and denial meant in maidens — when suddenly, turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of re-presentment, that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: "We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice call Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence, and a name" — and immediately awaking, I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor arm-chair, where I had fallen asleep, with the faithful Bridget unchanged by my side — but John L. (or James Elm) was gone forever.

THE SUPERANNUATED MAN

Sera tamen respexit
Libertas. VIRGIL.¹

A Clerk I was in London gay. O'KEEFE.

IF peradventure, Reader, it has been thy lot to waste the golden years of thy life — thy shining youth — in the irksome confinement of an office ; to have thy prison days prolonged through middle age down to decrepitude
5 and silver hairs, without hope of release or respite ; to have lived to forget that there are such things as holidays, or to remember them but as the prerogatives of childhood ; then, and then only, will you be able to appreciate my deliverance.

10 It is now six and thirty years since I took my seat at the desk in Mincing Lane. Melancholy was the transition at fourteen from the abundant playtime, and the frequently-intervening vacations of school-days, to the eight, nine, and sometimes ten hours' a day attendance at a
15 counting-house. But time partially reconciles us to anything. I gradually became content — doggedly contented, as wild animals in cages.

It is true I had my Sundays to myself ; but Sundays, admirable as the institution of them is for purposes of
20 worship, are for that very reason the very worst adapted

¹ "Freedom though belated thought [on me]." Quotation, somewhat changed round, from *Eclagues*, i. 27.

for days of unbending and recreation. In particular, there is a gloom for me attendant upon a city Sunday, a weight in the air. I miss the cheerful cries of London, the music, and the ballad-singers—the buzz and stirring murmur of the streets. Those eternal bells depress me.⁵ The closed shops repel me. Prints, pictures, all the glittering and endless succession of knacks and gewgaws, and ostentatiously displayed wares of tradesmen, which make a week-day saunter through the less busy parts of the metropolis so delightful—are shut out. No book¹⁰ stalls deliciously to idle over—No busy faces to recreate the idle man who contemplates them ever passing by—the very face of business a charm by contrast to his temporary relaxation from it. Nothing to be seen but unhappy countenances—or half-happy at best—of eman-¹⁵ cipated 'prentices and little tradesfolks, with here and there a servant-maid that has got leave to go out, who, slaving all the week, with the habit has lost almost the capacity of enjoying a free hour; and livelily expressing the hollowness of a day's pleasuring. The very strollers²⁰ in the fields on that day look anything but comfortable.

But besides Sundays I had a day at Easter, and a day at Christmas, with a full week in the summer to go and air myself in my native fields of Hertfordshire. This last was a great indulgence; and the prospect of its recur-²⁵ rence, I believe, alone kept me up through the year, and made my durance tolerable. But when the week came round, did the glittering phantom of the distance keep touch with me? or rather was it not a series of seven un-

easy days, spent in restless pursuit of pleasure, and a wearisome anxiety to find out how to make the most of them? Where was the quiet, where the promised rest? Before I had a taste of it, it was vanished. I was at the
5 desk again, counting upon the fifty-one tedious weeks that must intervene before such another snatch would come. Still the prospect of its coming threw something of an illumination upon the darker side of my captivity. Without it, as I have said, I could scarcely have sustained
10 my thralldom.

Independently of the rigours of attendance, I have ever been haunted with a sense (perhaps a mere caprice) of incapacity for business. This, during my latter years, had increased to such a degree, that it was visible in all
15 the lines of my countenance. My health and my good spirits flagged. I had perpetually a dread of some crisis, to which I should be found unequal. Besides my daylight servitude, I served over again all night in my sleep, and would awake with terrors of imaginary false entries,
20 errors in my accounts, and the like. I was fifty years of age, and no prospect of emancipation presented itself. I had grown to my desk, as it were; and the wood had entered into my soul.

My fellows in the office would sometimes rally me upon
25 the trouble legible in my countenance; but I did not know that it had raised the suspicions of any of my employers, when, on the fifth of last month, a day ever to be remembered by me, L——, the junior partner in the firm, calling me on one side, directly taxed me with my

bad looks, and frankly inquired the cause of them. So taxed, I honestly made confession of my infirmity, and added that I was afraid I should eventually be obliged to resign his service. He spoke some words of course to hearten me, and there the matter rested. A whole 5 week I remained labouring under the impression that I had acted imprudently in my disclosure ; that I had foolishly given a handle against myself, and had been anticipating my own dismissal. A week passed in this manner, the most anxious one, I verily believe, in my whole 10 life, when on the evening of the 12th of April, just as I was about quitting my desk to go home (it might be about eight o'clock) I received an awful summons to attend the presence of the whole assembled firm in the formidable back parlour. I thought, now my time is surely 15 come, I have done for myself, I am going to be told that they have no longer occasion for me. I——, I could see, smiled at the terror I was in, which was a little relief to me, — when to my utter astonishment B——, the eldest partner, began a formal harangue to me on the length 20 of my services, my very meritorious conduct during the whole of the time (the deuce, thought I, how did he find out that? I protest I never had the confidence to think as much). He went on to descant on the expediency of retiring at a certain time of life (how my heart panted!) 25 and asking me a few questions as to the amount of my own property, of which I have a little, ended with a proposal, to which his three partners nodded a grave assent, that I should accept from the house, which I had served

so well, a pension for life to the amount of two-thirds of my accustomed salary — a magnificent offer! I do not know what I answered between surprise and gratitude, but it was understood that I accepted their proposal, and I was told that I was free from that hour to leave their service. I stammered out a bow, and at just ten minutes after eight I went home — forever. This noble benefit — gratitude forbids me to conceal their names — I owe to the kindness of the most munificent firm in the world — the house of Boldero, Merryweather, Bosanquet, and Lacy.

*Fito perpetua!*¹

For the first day or two I felt stunned, overwhelmed. I could only apprehend my felicity; I was too confused to taste it sincerely. I wandered about, thinking I was happy, and knowing that I was not. I was in the condition of a prisoner in the old Bastile, suddenly let loose after a forty years' confinement. I could scarce trust myself with myself. It was like passing out of Time into Eternity — for it is a sort of Eternity for a man to have his Time all to himself. It seemed to me that I had more time on my hands than I could ever manage. From a poor man, poor in Time, I was suddenly lifted up into a vast revenue; I could see no end of my possessions; I wanted some steward, or judicious bailiff, to manage my estates in Time for me. And here let me caution persons grown old in active business, not lightly, nor without weighing their own resources, to forego their customary

¹ Be thou continual.

employment all at once, for there may be danger in it. I feel it by myself, but I know that my resources are sufficient; and now that those first giddy raptures have subsided, I have a quiet home feeling of the blessedness of my condition. I am in no hurry. Having all holidays, I am as though I had none. If Time hung heavy upon me, I could walk it away; but I do *not* walk all day long, as I used to do in those old transient holidays, thirty miles a day, to make the most of them. If Time were troublesome, I could read it away; but I do *not* read in that violent measure, with which, having no Time my own but candlelight Time, I used to weary out my head and eyesight in bygone winters. I walk, read or scribble (as now) just when the fit seizes me. I no longer hunt after pleasure; I let it come to me. I am like the man

——— that's born, and has his years come to him,
In some green desert.

"Years," you will say! "what is this superannuated simpleton calculating upon? He has already told us, he is past fifty."

I have indeed lived nominally fifty years, but deduct out of them the hours which I have lived to other people, and not to myself, and you will find me still a young fellow. For *that* is the only true Time, which a man can properly call his own, that which he has all to himself; the rest, though in some sense he may be said to live it, is other people's time, not his. The remnant of my poor days, long or short, is at least multiplied for me three-

fold. My ten next years, if I stretch so far, will be as long as any preceding thirty. 'Tis a fair rule-of-three sum.

Among the strange fantasies which beset me at the commencement of my freedom, and of which all traces are not yet gone, one was, that a vast tract of time had intervened since I quitted the Counting House. I could not conceive of it as an affair of yesterday. The partners, and the clerks, with whom I had for so many years, and for so many hours in each day of the year, been closely associated — being suddenly removed from them — they seemed as dead to me. There is a fine passage, which may serve to illustrate this fancy, in a Tragedy by Sir Robert Howard, speaking of a friend's death :

————— 'Twas but just now he went away;
 15 I have not since had time to shed a tear;
 And yet the distance does the same appear
 As if he had been a thousand years from me.
 Time takes no measure in Eternity.

To dissipate this awkward feeling, I have been fain to go among them once or twice since; to visit my old desk-fellows — my co-brethren of the quill — that I had left below in the state militant. Not all the kindness with which they received me could quite restore to me that pleasant familiarity, which I had heretofore enjoyed among them. We cracked some of our old jokes, but methought they went off but faintly. My old desk; the peg where I hung my hat, were appropriated to another. I knew it must be, but I could not take it kindly. D——I take me, if I did not feel some remorse — beast,

if I had not,—at quitting my old companions, the faithful partners of my toils for six and thirty years, that smoothed for me with their jokes and countermans the ruggedness of my professional road. Had it been so rugged then after all? or was I a coward simply? Well, it is too late to repent; and I also know, that these suggestions are a common fallacy of the mind on such occasions. But my heart smote me. I had violently broken the bands betwixt us. It was at least not courteous. I shall be some time before I get quite reconciled to the separation. Farewell, old cronies, yet not for long, for again and again I will come among ye, if I shall have your leave. Farewell Ch——,¹ dry, sarcastic, and friendly! Do——,² mild, slow to move, and gentlemanly! P——,³ officious to do, and to volunteer, good services!—and thou, thou dreary pile, fit mansion for a Gresham or a Whittington of old, stately House of Merchants; with thy labyrinthine passages, and light-excluding, pent up offices, where candles for one half the year supplied the place of the sun's light; unhealthy contributor to my weal, stern as fosterer of my living, farewell! In thee remain, and not in the obscure collection of some wandering bookseller, my "works!" There let them rest, as I do from my labours, piled on thy massy shelves, more MSS. in folio than ever Aquinas left, and full as useful! My mantle I bequeath among ye.

A fortnight has passed since the date of my first communication. At that period I was approaching to

¹ John Chambers. ² Henry Disdwell. ³ W. D. Punsley.

tranquillity, but had not reached it. I boasted of a calm indeed, but it was comparative only. Something of the first flutter was left; an unsettling sense of novelty; the dazzle to weak eyes of unaccustomed light. I missed my old
5 chains, forsooth, as if they had been some necessary part of my apparel. I was a poor Carthusian, from strict cellular discipline suddenly by some revolution returned upon the world. I am now as if I had never been other than my own master. It is natural to me to go where I please,
10 to do what I please. I find myself at eleven o'clock in the day in Bond Street, and it seems to me that I have been sauntering there at that very hour for years past. I digress into Soho, to explore a book stall. Methinks I have been thirty years a collector. There is nothing
15 strange nor new in it. I find myself before a fine picture in the morning. Was it ever otherwise? What is become of Fish Street Hill? Where is Fenchurch Street? Stones of old Mincing Lane, which I have worn with my daily pilgrimage for six and thirty years, to the footsteps of what
20 toil-worn clerk are your everlasting flints¹ now vocal? I indent the gayer flags of Pall Mall. It is Change time, and I am strangely among the Elgin marbles. It was no hyperbole when I ventured to compare the change in my condition to a passing into another world. Time stands still
25 in a manner to me. I have lost all distinction of season. I do not know the day of the week, or of the month. Each day used to be individually felt by me in its reference to

¹ Reference to the paving-stones, which in England are flint; but the phrase is Shakespearean. See *Romeo and Juliet*, II, 6, 17.

the foreign post-days; in its distance from, or propinquity to, the next Sunday. I had my Wednesday feelings, my Saturday nights' sensations. The genius of each day was upon me distinctly during the whole of it, affecting my appetite, spirits, &c. The phantom of the next day, with the dreary five to follow, sat as a load upon my poor Salibath's recreations. What charm has washed that Ethiop white? What is gone of Black Monday? All days are the same. Sunday itself—that unfortunate failure of a holiday as it too often proved, what with my sense of its fugitiveness, and over-care to get the greatest quantity of pleasure out of it—is melted down into a week-day. I can spare to go to church now, without grudging the huge candle¹ which it used to seem to cut out of the holiday. I have Time for everything. I can visit a sick friend, I can interrupt the man of much occupation when he is busiest. I can insult² over him with an invitation to take a day's pleasure with me to Windsor this fine May morning. It is Lucretian pleasure to behold the poor drodges, whom I have left behind in the world, carking and caring; like horses in a mill, drudging on in the same eternal round—and what is it all for? A man can never have too much Time to himself, nor too little to do. Had I a little son, I would christen him Nornoo-ro-ro; he should do nothing. Man, I verily believe, is out of his element as long as he is operative. I am altogether for the life contemplative. Will

¹ A piece, fragment.

² An unusual and somewhat archaic employment of the word *insult* as an intransitive verb.

no kindly earthquake come and swallow up those accursed cotton-mills? Take me that lumber of a desk there, and bowl it down

As low as to the fiends.

5 I am no longer *****¹, clerk to the Firm of &c. I am Retired Leisure. I am to be met with in trim gardens. I am already come to be known by my vacant face and careless gesture, perambulating at no fixed pace, nor with any settled purpose. I walk about; not to and from. They
10 tell me, a certain *cum dignitate*¹ air, that has been buried so long with my other good parts, has begun to shoot forth in my person. I grow into gentility perceptibly. When I take up a newspaper, it is to read the state of the opera. *Opus operatum est.*² I have done all that I came
15 into this world to do. I have worked task-work, and have the rest of the day to myself.

¹From the phrase *otium cum dignitate*, ease with dignity.

²The play (or ceremony) has been performed.

NOTES

The heavy marginal figures stand for page, and the lighter ones for line.

As intimated in the *Introduction*, the essays here chosen for reading are largely autobiographical; not however in the factual sense. They are rather in the nature of what are sometimes called *Confessions*; being the record of the writer's (i.e. James Ellis's) tastes, sympathies, and sentiments, given not at all in a didactic way, but conversationally, as if friend were talking with friend.

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL FIVE-AND-THIRTY YEARS AGO

PAGES 21-41

To enter rightly into the feeling of this essay, one needs to put one's self into the position indicated in the title. The writer, with the experience and judgement of an elderly man, is recalling his school-days across a chasm of thirty-five years; bringing up again not in regret but in keen realization the school-boy fare, the juvenile trials and joys, the teachers as seen through the eyes both of boy and man, and the schoolmates who long ago left school for the world of success and failure. If you are attentive, two things will grow upon you as you read: how intimately Lamb enters into a boy's life and feelings; and how much more he makes them mean than the boy himself realized in the time of boyhood, though now that it is told it will be recognized as true.

21 : 1. Mr. Lamb's "Works." It must be borne in mind that Lamb published these essays not under his own name but under the assumed signature of Elia; hence his reference to another paper of his own, as if it were the work of some one else. In

Recollections of Christ's Hospital, to which he refers, he gives a eulogistic account of his old school, much after the manner of a commendatory circular, but designed in part to defend it against certain charges of favouritism which had been brought against the directors of it. The present essay, which is written less in the business-like and more in the literary style, is designed in part to give another side of the picture, not shunning what would seem to make against the school life or the instructors. Lamb's earlier writings, in prose and verse, now little read by the side of the *Elia* essays, were gathered into two volumes of *Lamb's Works*, in 1818.

—2. *My old school.* Christ's Hospital, which the names of its two eminent pupils, Charles Lamb and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, have perhaps done more than any other names to make famous, otherwise called the Blue-coat school, was a charity-school founded in 1552 by Edward VI. in generous response to a sermon on charity by Bishop Ridley. His object was "to take out of the streets all the fatherless children and other men's children that were not able to keep them, and to bring them to the late dissolved house of the Grey Friars, which they devised to be a hospital for them, where they should have meat, drink, and clothes, lodging and learning, and officers to attend upon them." Its scope was afterward somewhat enlarged so as to take in not only the children of the very poor but the children of reduced or embarrassed parents of whatever class. Formerly in Newgate Street, the school is now removed to Sussex, near the village of Horsham. — 7. *The cloisters.* The school building, as the foregoing note shows, was "the late dissolved house of the Grey Friars," that is, a cloister or monastery.

21: 11. *Advantages, which I . . . had not.* Though speaking of himself, Lamb is of course assuming the personality of *Elia*. Apart from this natural literary device, however, this may perhaps be taken as the occasion for speaking of a trait of Lamb's for which the reader must always be prepared, namely, a kind of Puckish delight in mystifying his reader about literal facts. He holds himself free to attribute sayings or experiences to whatever person it

best sells him to; changes names of places and persons; mingles his own impressions with those of others as he will. Some instances of these things will be pointed out; it would, however, serve no practical purpose to trace them minutely. The trait is due partly to Lamb's whimsy and sly humor, but more truly, I think, to his fine literary sense of the value he would impart to the reader. For first, if we should study the instances carefully we should doubtless find that he has thoughtfully created in each case the situation adapted to produce the best effect; and secondly, he does not want his reader to take his description as a piece of cold information, to be believed and verified like history, but rather to take it according to the sentiment or impression which constitutes its real inner value.

— 12. His friends lived in town. Lamb's family lived in apartments in the Inner Temple, where his father, a man of swelling character and considerable culture, was a kind of upper servant or private secretary to one of the benchers, Samuel Salt. Lamb has described the character and occupation of his father, under the name of Lovell, in his essay on *The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple*.

— 17. His tea and hot rolls. If it seems odd that Lamb should, in describing his old school after thirty-five years, be so particular to describe the fire, it should be remembered that Lamb was only seven and a half years on entering (in 1783), and left the school when he was less than fourteen; hence the impressions he retains are those of a young boy, to whom eating and holidays and play and punishments are the vivid events of life. And from this point on we are to realize how truly Lamb speaks as it were through a boy's consciousness, and of boys' affairs, while as a man he can look back and get the meaning of these as boys in the time of them could not.

— 22. By his maid or aunt. His father's sister, Aunt Henry (more properly Sarah) Lamb, who regarded him as her special favorite. She is described in his essay on *My Relations*.

23 + 2. Those dates which the ravens misdated. A reference to the story of Elijah "the Tishbite" fed by ravens, 1 Kings xviii; but he gets his imagination of the food, probably, from *Paradise*

Regained, ii. 266-270. See *Grace before Meat*, 132 : 13-16, where the same story is again referred to and Milton's lines quoted.

— 3. **The contending passions of L.** Note these carefully as he enumerates them in the next sentence, — the feelings of a sensitive, shy, yet sympathetic boy. Note how a tender regard for others' feelings dominates, and a shrinking from being favoured above his mates. It was this character which endeared him, not only in school but throughout his life, to his friends; it is the constant and spontaneous expression of this character which, as an undertone to every subject he writes about, makes him the best-loved writer of English literature.

23 : 11. **I was a poor friendless boy.** Having spoken of Lamb, he now describes himself (writing as Elia); but the one whom he is really describing here is his schoolmate, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), who entered the school on the same day with him (July 17, 1782), coming from Ottery St. Mary in Devonshire, however, not "Calne in Wiltshire" (l. 26), as Elia intimates of himself.

23 : 20. **O the cruelty.** It is characteristic of Lamb to feel deeply the homesickness and loneliness of his schoolmate. Coleridge himself has described how unhappy he was in his early days at school.

24 : 1. **Whole-day-leaves.** Days (saints' days, king's birthdays, and others), on which the pupils could be absent from the Hospital the entire day. Though the vacations were short, there was, as compensation, a generous allowance of these *whole-day-leaves*. —

5. **Which L. recalls with such relish.** In *Recollections of Christ's Hospital*, the description is: "our delightful excursions in the summer holidays to the New River near Newington, where, like others, we would live the long day in the water, never caring for dressing ourselves when we had once stripped." — 11. **Pennyless.** Note that this word has a somewhat different shade of meaning from the commonly spelled word *penniless*; for which latter see 151 : 22.

25 : 1. **L.'s governor** was Mr. Samuel Salt, a benchler of the Inner Temple and the employer of Lamb's father; see note on

21:12. More strictly, then, Lamb's father lived under the governor's roof.—8. I have been called out of my bed. As this is Elia speaking, the malignity might have happened of any one; the cruelty of it, like the homesickness mentioned on 23, 20-26 is made more vivid by being told of a "poor friendless boy."

26:11. Leads of the ward. Sheets of lead roofing.—12. Better than a week. An old-fashioned way of saying *more than*, with a somewhat diminished stress, like *rather more than* a week.—13. Cry roast meat. A colloquial expression for betraying one's good fortune; it is defined four lines below.—16. Waxing fat, and kicking. Like Jeshurun in *Deuteronomy* xxxiii. 15; a reproach brought against the people of Israel in Moses' song. Referred to again in *Crucifixion*, 130:22.—19. A ram's horn blast, etc. Lamb draws his allusion from the account of the taking of Jericho in *Joshua* vi, adapting it to a somewhat modified application.—21. The client, *i.e.* the ass, was sent to Smithfield market. It is Lamb's whimsical way to speak of the ass and the boy as client and patron.—24. L.'s admired Petry. In the former article this steward is represented as much loved by the boys; here, by one who writes with a sense of the mischief that could be perpetrated, it is intimated that he was lax in duty, and another instance of his negligence is given in the next paragraph.

26:25. Facile administration. Explain how this is a euphemism with a touch of irony. Note how the magnificence of the room is made to intensify the contrast, as presented by the half-starved youngsters.—27:11. In the hall of Dido. The line here given is adapted, not quoted, from Virgil's *Aeneid*, l. 464.

27:19. — suffered. In the key of names which Lamb drew up to explain these blanks, he leaves this person unidentified, perhaps from unwillingness to wound the sensibilities of persons still living.—21. 'Twas said, etc. This also is not a quotation but an adaptation of *Antony and Cleopatra*, l. 4, 67, 68.

28:7. The accursed thing. Scripture phraseology, taken from the story of Achan, *Joshua* vii. 13 — 29:15. Did not do quite so

well by himself. The whole foregoing story of his classmate is an example of Lamb's characteristic kindness of judgement. He contrives to make the self-sacrifice of the boy stand out beyond anything else; and when he traces his after life of poverty and perhaps shiftlessness he intimates it in the softest terms.

29: 20. I was a hypochondriac lad. This trait helps us to realize more vividly what he is about to describe, and adds to the poignancy of the described suffering. The choice of details, the implied contrasts and likenesses, make together a powerful appeal to the sympathetic imagination. — 27. Bedlam cells. The English name for an insane asylum is Bedlam; a name said to be corrupted from Bethlehem.

31: 3. Disfigurements in Dante. The imprisoned souls in Dante's *Inferno* are represented as bodies in various distorted and disfigured guises, and some of them endeavoured to lay hold on the poet as he passed. — 5. L.'s favourite state-room. Lamb, as Elia, takes perverse delight in throwing despite on the sentiments, or tastes, shown by Lamb in his proper person, in the former article. In ll. 3-12 on p. 27, he has made the splendour of the room accentuate by contrast the famine of the boys; now similarly he makes it enhance the sense of the iniquity and cruelty of the punishment; and this by extreme lightness of touch. — 15. The uttermost stripe. Lamb here imitates scripture phraseology; see *Matthew* v. 26, which speaks of "the uttermost farthing."

32: 7. Never happier, than in them. By this remark Lamb prepares his reader for the description of the idle and careless school life which was led under Matthew Field; a description probably somewhat exaggerated for effect. — 25. "Like a dancer." This phrase, the meaning of which explains itself, is quoted from Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, iii. 11. 36. Lamb quotes it again in his essay, *Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist*. — 33: 19. Rousseau and John Locke. Mentioned here because both were authors of treatises on education, and would have been amused to see these occupations of the juvenile mind.

34: 9. Helots to his young Spartans. Helots, in Greece, were drunken slaves, who were exhibited by Spartan parents to their children as a warning. The boys on Lamb's side of the school were regarded as a similar "awful example" to Mr. Hoyer's rigorously disciplined boys.—15. By the Samite. Pythagoras, the philosopher, a native of Samos, who compelled his pupils to listen to his lectures five years before speaking in response. The silence that he enjoyed, then, was like that of Hoyer's rigidly disciplined classes.—16. Our little Goshen. In *Exodus* viii. 22, the land of Goshen, in which the children of Israel dwelt, was set apart as a place where they were clear of the plagues that troubled the land of Egypt.—21. Our fleece was dry. For this allusion Lamb refers to Cowley (*The Complaint*, stanza 7), but in the Bible story, *Judges* vi. 36-40, the miracle was wrought successively both ways: first the ground dry and the fleece wet, and the second time as indicated here.

36: 10. Into his lair. Note how the use of this word fits with the description of Hoyer as a sort of wild beast.

37: 9. This exquisite irrecognition, etc. A good sentence to study for its choice of words to convey a subtle and delicate thought.

37: 13. L. has given credit, etc. The reference is to Lamb's earlier essay, *Recollections of Coleridge's Hospital*; see note 21: 1. In this summarizing paragraph, Coleridge's "Itinerary life" is his work entitled *Biographia Literaria*. "The author of the Country Spectator" was Thomas Fauslane Middleton; see next paragraph. One sentence from Lamb's former essay may illustrate, as do all the opening paragraphs of this essay, his kindly habit, in passing judgement on persons, of making the good overbalance the bad: "He was a disciplinarian, indeed, of a different stamp from him whom I have just described; but, now the terrors of the rod, and of a temper a little too hasty to leave the more nervous of us quiet at our ease to do justice to his merits in those days, are long since over, ungrateful were we if we should refine our testimony to that

unwearied assiduity with which he attended to the particular improvement of each of us."

38: 23. **To bear his mitre high.** The mitre is the symbol of the bishop's office, as is the crown of the king's. Lamb takes occasion to point the contrast between the bishop's official conduct and his real character.

39: 13. **Come back into memory.** By the apostrophe and the impassioned style of the address Lamb conveys the impression of his special love for his friend Coleridge, who indeed remained Lamb's intimate friend and correspondent until his death. —

15. **The dark pillar not yet turned.** An allusion to the melancholia that for a large part of Coleridge's life rendered him unfit for effective work; a state owing largely to his intemperate use of opium. The allusion is put in a scriptural image taken from the pillar of cloud and fire, and especially from the incident noted in *Exodus* xiv. 20, where the pillar at once gave light to the Israelites and was dark to the Egyptians; that is, it had in that historical case a light and a dark side. — 26. **Old Fuller.** Thomas Fuller (1608-1661), who in his *Worthies of England*, under Warwickshire, makes this comparison between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. See note, 105: 8.

40: 9. **Nor shalt thou . . . be quickly forgotten.** Apostrophe again. If Lamb responded so fervently to Coleridge's genius and personal friendship, it was also in him to recall with almost equal fervour a sunny humorous nature, like that of Allen.

41: 4. **Poor Sizars.** Students who, on account of extreme poverty, have free commons. It is to be noted how, in the case of both these partial failures, Lamb leaves the reader with the sense of the nobler and redeeming qualities. If he could not record some good thing of a man, he passed him by in silence; see 39: 9-12.

MACKERY END, IN HERTFORDSHIRE

PAGES 48-49

The caption of this essay is more truly an almost casual note of place than a real title. What Lamb set out to write about is indicated in the concluding paragraph of the essay on *My Relations*, which in the complete edition stood just before this. In that essay he introduced his two cousins, James and Bridget Elia; and then, having under the first name given a description of his brother, John Lamb, thus proceeds: "In my next, Reader, I may perhaps give you some account of my cousin Bridget—if you are not already satisfied with cousins—and take you by the hand, if you are willing to go with us, on an excursion which we made a summer or two since, in search of more cousins—"

"Through the green fields of pleasant Hertfordshire."

This essay thus, availing itself of its informal type of discourse, is virtually two essays in one.

as: 1. Bridget Elia, whom Elia calls his cousin, is Charles Lamb's sister Mary, of whom, as an occasional invalid, he is taking care for life; see *Introduction*, p. 17. We shall find her mentioned again, and traits of hers described, in the essay on *Old China*, p. 110 ff. In the essay on *Mrs. Butler's Opinions on Whims*, too, he remarks: "When I am in sickness, or not in the best spirits, I sometimes call for the cards, and play a game at piquet for *love* with my cousin Bridget—Bridget Elia." There is no mistaking the *tone of affection*, and *perhaps admiration*, with which she is described.—2. To go out upon the mountains, an allusion to Jephthah's daughter; see *Judges* vi. 35. There is perhaps a touch of the whimsical in Elia's making himself an old bachelor rather than a maid, dwell in his cell-bary.—3. "With a difference." This quotation from Ophelia's speech, *Hamlet*, iv. 5, 166, and the quotation 43:9, "holds Nature's race dearer," from Gay's *Epitaph of Richard*, illustrate Lamb's use of quotations, which generally

was not so much to point a moral as to preserve a happy turn of phrase. For this trait of them his quotations are well worth study; but also his own skill in delicate and felicitous phrasing is very characteristic of his style. Note, for instance, how delightfully, in the next two sentences, he carries out the suggestion expressed in "with a difference." — 16. Old Burton. Robert Burton (1577-1640), author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, published in 1621; a quaint storehouse of odd facts, fancies, and quotations, illustrative especially of the sad and moody humours of the mind. The "strange contemporaries" (l. 17) here mentioned were representative of the age in English literature when authors were especially given to curious conceits of thought and wording, such "out-of-the-way humours and opinions" (43 : 3) as attracted Lamb's fancy and moulded the "self-pleasing quaintness" of his style. — 43 : 10. *Religio Medici*, by Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682), a Norwich physician, written about 1635, and containing weighty and tolerant religious thought, but in the quaint vein, with its "beautiful obliquities," so congenial to Lamb. — 13. The intellectuals of . . . Margaret Newcastle. That Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle, who in 1667 published a life of her husband, was a prime favourite with Lamb, is evident from the fact that he mentions her in terms of praise no fewer than four times in his essays; but it is equally evident that he liked her for her eccentricities, or possibly for the untutored oddities of her language. In his essay on the *Decay of Beggars* he refers to her in order to quote from her the word *romancical*. She might strike others very differently, as he intimates here, from the way she strikes him; Pepys, in his *Diary* for March 18, 1668, writes: "Stayed at home, reading the ridiculous *History of my Lord Newcastle*, wrote by his wife, which shows her to be a mad, conceited, ridiculous woman, and he an ass to suffer her to write what she writes to him, and of him." With this contrast what Lamb says of the book in *Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading*; see 121 : 3-6.

44 : 7. With a gentle hand. Note how Lamb softens his lan-

guage when he has anything derogatory or satirical to say; touching the table as lightly as he can, and supplying extenuations. Query: may not his use of the old-fashioned endings to his verbs ("kath an awkward trick," l. 9; "passeth by the name," l. 22; "maketh matters worse," 45: 10) be a means of softening his language and making it to a degree playful?—"To let slip a word less seasonably," l. 19, is a good example of his stating a fault delicately.

44: 22. Tumbled early . . . browsed at will. Do not miss the felicitous use of these metaphors. The "spacious closet" was the library of Samuel Salt, the employer of Charles Lamb's father, who gave the children the freedom of his library.

45: 11. Divide your trouble. Probably a kind of play on Bacon's idea in his essay *On Friendship*, that friendship "redoubleth joys, and cutteth grief in halves"—Note how, by the distinction suggested, this is made the occasion of making transition to the second half of the essay, the subject on which Lamb set out to write.

45: 18. Mackery End, and the occupants whom Lamb visited, are sufficiently described in the text. It was the name given to the several buildings of an estate, a mansion and outlying farm-houses. It was in the farm-house and among the common working people that Lamb visited. In this paragraph, with the exception of Bridget, Lamb uses real names and relationships.

46: 18. We had never forgotten. Lamb dwells with characteristic fondness on that period of childhood where memory begins, and on the later imagination which blends with memory.

46: 23. "Heart of June." Quoted from Ben Jonson. See above, note on 42: 9.—26. The stanza is from Wordsworth's *Narrow Fitted*. Of this stanza Lamb wrote to Wordsworth in 1815,—
"than which I think no lovelier stanza can be found in the wide world of poetry."

47: 1. Waking bliss, as contrasted with the half dreamy illusion of her brother, as described 46: 20. The phrase is from Milton's

Comus.—9. More pardonable . . . than decorous. Another instance of delicate statement; compare note 44:7.

47:27. Those slender ties, etc. Note how well-worded and clean-cut is the contrast expressed in this sentence.—48:6. The two scriptural cousins. An allusion to Mary and Elizabeth; see *Luke* i. 36, 39, 40.—25. Astonishment . . . astoundment. Does Lamb use these two words for different shades of meaning (and if so what difference can you make?), or merely for variety of wording?—26. B. F. Barron Field, a friend of Lamb's, a man of letters, who, as the text intimates, removed from England to reside in Australia. He made this journey to Mackery End along with the Lambs, possibly *cousin-hunting* like them (compare the name Field, 46:4), though here he is spoken of as "almost the only thing that was not a cousin there."

The last sentence of the essay may profitably be studied both for its very accurate description of a mental process, and for the skilful way in which it works up to a cadence, and ends with the title of the essay.

MY FIRST PLAY

PAGES 50-56

Like many of Lamb's essays, this is rambling and discursive in getting at its main point of interest; but it is rightly named, for evidently his main impulse to write the essay was to describe the interest and wonder of a child's mind, and its contrast with the more sophisticated mind of later life. In a less weighty and philosophical treatment the subject is similar to that of Wordsworth's well-known ode on *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*. Both describe the disillusion that comes in after years to dispel the glamour and pure imagination of childhood. It was a matter on which Lamb felt keenly; deprecating especially the dispelling of childhood illusions by prematurely explaining them away. In an early sketch on *Play-House Memoranda*, which is a

kind of preliminary sketch for this essay, he says: "We crush the faculty of delight and wonder in children, by explaining everything. We take them to the source of the Nile, and show them the scanty runnings, instead of letting the beginnings of that sevenfold stream remain in impenetrable darkness, a mysterious question of wonderment and delight to ages."

50: 1. **A portal.** Note how Lamb uses this solitary surviving relic of a long-demolished building to transport his reader into the thought and atmosphere of long ago, which then he concentrates on the event of his first visit to the theatre. So in the first short paragraph he sends the imagination back through forty years, and by one or two details sets it to thinking like a child.—6. **Old Drury—Garrick's Drury.** Drury Lane theatre in its day was so prominent in London life that it is almost historic, and especially as connected with one of the most renowned of actors, David Garrick (1716–1779), whose career came in the times of the great eighteenth-century men of letters, Johnson, Burke, and Goldsmith.

50: 21. **Whose gait and bearing.** The gait and bearing of these imitators of each other would be the most vivid memory in a child's mind. In his essay on *Some of the Old Actors* he says of this John Palmer: "In sock or buskin there was an air of swaggering gentility about Jack Palmer. He was a *gentleman* with a slight infusion of the *footman*."—51: 1. **Young Brinsley.** *I.e.* Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816), the celebrated dramatist and manager, known to us as the author, among others, of two plays that still hold the stage, *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal*. Of his matrimonial escapade, which occurred in 1773, sufficient is told here.—9. **Brinsley's easy autograph.** An allusion to his debt-incurring proclivity, though in this case, by the facile way of paying his oil bills by theatre orders, he satisfied one admirer, who was willing thus to take his pay.

51: 18. **Ciceronian.** The word has become a synonym for a sonorous and somewhat artificial style of enunciation. Browning,

16. *The Bishop Orders His Tomb*, uses Cicero (or rather his middle name, Tullius) as the norm of elegant and classical language—

"Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word."

—52: 1. The highest parochial honours, perhaps a churchwarden of St. Andrew's, Holborn, a church still standing near Holborn Viaduct.

52: 4. Little wondrous talismans! Note how keenly Lamb enters, in every detail, into the remembered wonder and delight of the child mind.—5. The only landed property, etc. Lamb is using real names and an authentic event of his life here, though it seems he inherited it rather from the widow than from Mr. Fild himself. The "exemplary mansion," on its three-quarters of an acre, was a thatched cottage; and the name which the property still bears, "Button Snap," is thought to have been bestowed by Lamb himself.

53: 6. But when we got in. From this phrase to the end of the paragraph is a kind of climax, more detail by detail the little things which add to the intensity of childish anticipation, until with the last sentence the culmination is reached. Note how the parenthetical "I was not just six years old" is put in where it best enhances the effect of the mental state he is describing.—8. Endured. Note the choice of a word which intimates that the intense interest was almost painful; compare an expression of Wordsworth's, "aching joys."—20. "Fair Aurora!" The phrase is quoted from one of the songs of this play of *Artaxerxes*.—23. The maternal lap. This is said to be the only allusion to his mother that Lamb makes in his essays. It will be remembered that his sister Mary, who lived with him, had killed her mother in an attack of mania, and perhaps Lamb refrained from mentioning the mother out of regard for her feelings.—25. *Artaxerxes* was an English opera by a distinguished English composer, Thomas Augustine Arne (1710-1778). The only time when this opera and Garrick's pantomime at *Harlequin's*

Imagination were given together was December 1, 1780, which does not quite agree with the date given, 55-18.

54-5. The burning idol (or perhaps illuminated idol, an assumed compromise of the ancient sun-worship of Persia — 18. St. Denys, the patron saint of France, in the legend carried his head two miles after his decapitation.

55-16. As good and authentic. Lamb probably refers here to what is the most powerful feature of *Robinson Crusoe*, its intense realism and personality, etc. — 14. Grotesque Gothic heads. Lamb's interest is of course not in these but in that trait of young childhood which the wonder and novelty of the scene quite effaces the sense of the ridiculous. In a story which he wrote for *Mrs. Louisa's School or First Going to Church*, Lamb mentions these same grotesque heads in the Temple Church and the fact that in his childhood, when he saw them in a sacred edifice, he was not disposed to laugh at them. "I somehow fancied," he says, "they were the representation of wicked people set up as a warning."

56-16. The alteration. Note the elaborate paradox in "those many centuries — of no short twelve months." This last paragraph is Lamb's way of describing the same change in mind and feelings, between youth and age, which Wordsworth describes in stanzas iv and v of his *Immortality* ode:—

"Whether it be the visionary gain?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?"

At length the Muse perceives it die away,
And falls into the light of common day."

Lamb, however, who puts this illusion somewhat early in youth, notes a third stage (lines 21-26), in which something of the old enjoyment of the dream comes back, but so that reason and imagination are in wholesome balance. Throughout his life the treasure remained to Lamb "the most delightful of recreations."

BARBARA S—

PAGES 57-64

In May, 1825, Lamb wrote to Wordsworth: "In the *London* which is just out are 2 papers entitled *The Superannuated Man*, which I wish you to see, and also 1st Apr., a little thing called *Barbara S—*, a story gleaned from Miss Kelly." The Miss Kelly here mentioned was Frances Maria Kelly, or Fanny Kelly as she was called, a favourite actress of Lamb's time; and the main incident of the story was an experience of her own childhood. In a letter written in 1875 Miss Kelly retells the story, and referring to Lamb's version of it, speaks of "the extraordinary skill with which he has, in the construction of his story, desired and contrived so to mystify and characterize the events, as to keep me out of sight, and render it utterly impossible for any one to guess at me as the original heroine." Lamb indeed takes liberties with some details; not, however, to mystify but to heighten the effect of his reading of the case. It was as a study in the innocence and trueheartedness of child character that the incident interested him, and it is to enhance these traits that he colours and modifies it. In other words (speaking in literary terms), it was for its descriptive value rather than for its narrative, that he wrote the story as he did.

A special interest attaches to Miss Kelly, the original of Barbara S—, from the fact that in 1819, when Lamb was forty-four and she fifteen years younger, he offered her his hand in marriage; but when she, on the ground of "an early and deeply rooted attachment," refused the offer, he relinquished his one dream of wedded life, and their relations, which were always friendly, continued as before. She died unmarried at the age of ninety-two; he at the age of fifty-nine. For his lifelong relinquishment of marriage (except for this one day's romance), and its cause, see *Introduction*, p. 17.

It is to be noted, however, that Lamb (or rather James Elia) does not use real names in this essay; and in fact attributes the source of the story to quite another person; see 64:10.

57:3. **Ascended the long rambling staircase.** It will be well to note the very leisurely way in which Lamb tells what story there is ("Indeed I have little or none to tell"—he says, 58:23). We can hardly call his manner, however, spinning it out, because the numerous details and digressions are put in to enhance the effect he really has at heart. Note how in this first paragraph he begins with a single narrative act, the rest serving merely to sketch what we may call the situation; then all is digression (the reader being once definitely put off, 58:23) until the same act is repeated, 60:16, and yet again, after more digression, 61:19. Yet these loiterings are pertinent to the writer's object; a profitable study would be to inquire how.

57:15. **Pious application of her small earnings.** The word *pious* is used in the older sense, like the classical (e.g. *pius Aeneas*, Virgil), i.e. due reverence or respect to others. This trait of Barbara's plays a prominent part in Lamb's portrayal of her character; see 60:19-61:6. Here it is used to bring out another trait; note what it is.

57:24. **She had already, etc.** Some standard child's parts, from Shakespeare's *King John* and *Richard III.*, are mentioned here, in the order in which they would be taken by a child gradually growing to older rôles.

58:21. **Indian rubber, or a pumice-stone, as eraser or cleanser;** referring to what has been said in l. 16.

59:14. **The part of the Little Son.** This will do for a remark in which Elia, according to his wont, is free to disguise things at his will; as a matter of fact, however, Miss Kelly, as related in Crabb Robinson's *Diary*, tells the incident of herself, when, as a child, she was acting the part of Arthur in *King John*, to Mrs. Siddons's Constance.

59:25. **An impediment in my speech.** This, which was a fact

of Lamb's life, has been mentioned in the *Introduction* as a disqualification which in his school life kept Lamb from being a Grecian, and so virtually a candidate for the university and a learned profession.—60:1. **Miss Kelly.** Lamb's skilful mystification of facts is noteworthy here, as this person is the very original of Barbara S——. Socially, he and his sister Mary were much more intimate with her than these words would indicate, and as dramatic critic Lamb wrote much in praise of her acting, and addressed two sonnets to her. In one of his letters he speaks of her "divine plain face."—15. **But I am growing a coxcomb.** Why? Note that in the foregoing paragraph it is Elia speaking; Charles Lamb, though fond of the society of actors, would not make it so much a matter of pride to be admitted to their distinguished attentions.

60:16. **As I was about to say.** Lamb comes for a moment within hailing distance of his story again; compare note on 57:3. Has his long digression contributed anything to our better appreciation of Barbara S — ?

60:21. **From causes which, etc.** Read the sentence carefully and see if you can tell what the causes were which he would not "arraign." Does he slyly reveal a hint of them in l. 25?

61:7. **Some child's part.** The part in which the roast fowl incident occurs is in the play, *The Children in the Wood*, in which Miss Kelly played, though at the time of this story Morton's play of that name "as yet . . . was not"; see 58:4.—7-18. Note, from the two contrasted parentheses in this paragraph how keen is Lamb's sympathy with the nature of a child's mind.

61:19. **The little starved, meritorious maid.** Are the two adjectives that Lamb uses here his way of summarizing the effect of the three previous paragraphs, so that we may have it in mind and appreciate the main incident more keenly? Note how they correspond to the paragraphs respectively.

62:5. **An unusual weight of metal.** This detail of the story is Lamb's invention, put in apparently to emphasize the small experience she had had with coin, so that anything unusual was the more

perceptible. In the version that Miss Kelly gives, she receives a bank-note; and, as she represents, was not so "untaught or innocent" as Lamb makes out Barbara S — to be, but, taking nothing for granted, unfolded it and discovered the mistake at the first convenient stopping-place.

62 : 7. **Mark the dilemma.** The best way to mark the dilemma, that is, as Lamb means it, the conflict of emotions between being honest and keeping the money, is, to note how this next paragraph prepares for and accentuates it, and then, in the long paragraph following, the considerations back and forth, like a kind of inner dialogue, until virtue, "that never-failing friend *did* step in."

62 : 11. **Porticoes of moral philosophy.** The moral philosophy of Athens, especially of the Stoics, was taught in an open air porch or portico, hence the association of a portico with philosophy.

63 : 29. **She knew the quality of honesty.** For this phrase Lamb is probably thinking of Shakespeare's "the quality of mercy," in *The Merchant of Venice* iv. i. 184. — At this point think back over the whole story, and see if these words do not mark the lesson or truth for which the writer has throughout been accumulating interest. It is all the skilful portrayal of a state of mind, and of a type of character, in which evidently he has intense interest.

64 : 11. **The late Mrs. Crawford.** In the opening note we have seen, from Lamb's own words, that he had the story from Miss Kelly; but we may remind ourselves again that, writing as James Elia, he can make his names and facts as fictitious as is his own assumed name. The Mrs. Crawford here mentioned was, indeed, a well-known actress of the day, and the facts he gives in the foot-note are true; but choosing to ascribe the story to her instead of to Miss Kelly, he speaks of one who is no longer living to prove or disprove it, or to have her personal experiences exposed.

THE SOUTH-SEA HOUSE

PAGES 65-76

Though not actually the first written, this was the first essay published under the name Elia, and designed to head the series. One feels the writer's sense of this fact to some extent in the style of it. Not that the style is exactly stiff; but it reads a little self-conscious, as if the writer were minded to impress a definite stamp of style and treatment on a new venture in literature. Perhaps his ostentatious use of the *thou* style adds to this effect; and his remark about how he has been using names, 76 : 23, is in the same vein, hinting at the treatment of facts he is adopting.

After leaving school, Lamb, in 1791, was a clerk for a while in the South-Sea House (see *Introduction*): so in this essay, which professes to date from forty years after (68 : 16) — though as a matter of fact it was only thirty-one — Lamb is giving impressions received in his seventeenth year and recorded in his forty-fourth. These remembered impressions, however, are not boyish; they give such things as a matured man would observe and put into delicate and masterly description. It is this descriptive effect that he is seeking to convey. The business of the South-Sea House was just the feeble survival of a financial scheme started in 1711; which scheme became prodigiously popular, investors speculating in its stocks and forcing them upward, until when they had reached the quotation of 1000, in 1720, the chairman and principal directors sold out, and suddenly the whole enterprise collapsed. The thing has become historic under the name of the *South-Sea Bubble*, sometimes the *South-Sea Hoax*. Macaulay, in his essay on *William Pitt*, has some sentences describing vividly the height of the craze and the frenzy produced by the crash. What Lamb is describing in our essay is the state of the business as it was seventy years after the failure; it is a description therefore of hopeless decay and increasing desolation, with which the whole aspect of the building

and the character of the clerks are in keeping. The atmosphere of ruin, we may say, pervades the essay; this was Lamb's design. At the opening of the next essay (see p. 77), Lamb thus gives it: "In my last I tried to divert thee with some half-forgotten humours of some old clerks defunct, in an old house of business, long since gone to decay."

65: 1. *Thy . . . thou.* In this his first *Elia* essay, Lamb seems to adopt this older style of address as a delicate intimation to his reader that this is a friendly and intimate conversational essay, rather than a piece of formal information; the old form of the pronoun like the address to familiar friends, as the Germans use the pronoun *du*. — 3. *The Flower Pot.* An inn in Bishopsgate Street, from which stages for the north of London started. — 6. *A melancholy looking, etc.* Note how this compendious description of the building strikes the key-note, as it were, of the essay; suggesting for it a kind of atmosphere of desolation; compare the opening note. Note how all the details of the succeeding paragraph are evidently chosen to enhance this feeling of desertedness and decay.

66: 11. An "unsunned heap," etc. The connection of these hidden hoards with Mammon is a suggestion from Spenser, but the phrase is from Milton's *Comus*, l. 398: —

"You may as well spread out the unsunned heaps
Of miser's treasure by an outlaw's den."

— 14. Of that famous BUBBLE. The *South-Sea Bubble*, and the *South-Sea Hoax* (see the word in capitals, 67: 5), are the names by which the celebrated South-Sea scheme, which is typical of wild financial speculation, has passed into history; compare the opening note.

66: 21. *Stagnates upon it.* From this and the preceding sentences reproduce in your mind the figure that makes this word fitting. — 67: 9. *Vaux's superhuman plot.* Lamb here uses the spelling *Vaux*, as if the man were French, though Guy Fawkes, the

originator of the famous Gunpowder Plot, was an Englishman. It was a plot to stow powder under the Houses of Parliament and blow them up while King, Ministers, Lords, and Commons were there, and by that means secure occasion to restore Roman Catholicism in England. This was in the time of James I., and the date set for it was November 5, 1605. The plot was discovered just in time; and in gratitude for their providential escape Parliament set apart November 5 as a day of national thanksgiving. This tremendous plot ranks in history by the side of the South-Sea craze, as an event of "Titan size."

67 : 25. Living accounts and accountants puzzle me. Speaking as Elia, in this and the succeeding sentence, Lamb can represent himself as he will; as Charles Lamb, however, he was an accountant all his days, and presumably had an accountant's skill in figuring. But these remarks of his are not false, for they are his indirect way of intimating that his life's interests are not in prosaic details of business, but in something else; see *Introduction*, pp. 11, 12. Lamb's choice of subject for this first Elia essay is very significant. He has to live among the dry routines of accounts, perhaps irksome and distasteful to him; and yet he chooses for subject a noted house of business, as if he were going to write its history. Instead of this, however, he transmutes its dull associations into imagination and poetry. He uses the suggestiveness of history and age and decay to give a poetic glamour to it. Read this paragraph through and note that every detail is in keeping not with an informational, but with an essentially poetic realization of his subject. Lamb's love of the past, too, with its power on the imagination, is very palpable here. — **68 : 8. Some better library.** Has Lamb the thought of a library belonging to a higher state of existence, as it were in Elysium?

68 : 18. They partook of the genius of the place! This remark furnishes a key to the exquisite descriptions of personal character which follow, and should be borne in mind in reading them. These clerks present various phases of a kind of left-over,

derelict type of man, stranded as it were in this decayed place of business.

69 : 7. Hence they formed, etc. Note that the succeeding sentences are without verbs, and yet separated from each other by periods. This manner of punctuating is a delicate aid to the description, giving as it does details each of which is complete in itself. A contrasted way of describing, by the use of the dash, may be noted in the opening paragraph of *Theo. Relations*, p. 87. — 11. Not a few among them, etc. What is the effect of this last detail, in its relation to those that precede? Name the figure it exemplifies.

69 : 13. A Cambro-Briton, that is, a Welshman. Cambria was the Latin name, which survived as the poetic name, of Wales. — The names of clerks which Lamb gives in this essay are real; whether their characters are to life or invented we do not know. — 20. As a gib-cat, or as we should say, a tom-cat. Lamb gets his phrase from Falstaff; see *First Henry IV.*, i. 2. 76. — 24. Haunted, . . . with the idea, etc. It will be noted that Lamb's chief interest is in describing minutely individualized character, and especially delicate, as it were insubjective, states of mind. In an earlier essay, entitled, *The Last Preach*, he describes the morbid impulse of kleptomania, and it is this at which he hints here. In *The Superannuated Man* (see p. 168) he describes in a similar way the accountant's dread of making false entries or errors in computing. — 70 : 10. Then was his forte. It will help our study of these descriptions of character to note that nearly all are represented as living a kind of double life, as if they were one man in relation to business and another in their inner selves. These sides of their character were contrasted but not incompatible; they blend in one personality. — 12. His countryman, Pennant. Thomas Pennant (1726-1798), a somewhat noted Welsh antiquary. — 20. The worthy descendants, etc. The reference is to the Huguenot refugees, mostly artisans of various trades, who were expelled from France after the revocation of the *Edict of Nantes* in

1685, and who, though so sterling a folk, were forced from extreme poverty to live in squalid conditions.

70: 26. **The air and stoop of a nobleman.** The succeeding paragraph, down to "the secret of Thomas's stoop," 71: 19, is worth careful study as a delicate analysis of a trait of character, its inner cause and its external effect in manner. — 71: 8. **Original state of white paper.** The Latin phrase *tabula rasa*, which was perhaps in Lamb's mind, is often used to describe this kind of innocent vacuity, intellectual or moral. — 23. **To you instead of riches, etc.** Note here, as you will have occasion to note frequently, how tolerant and sympathetic are Lamb's judgements of people; he always leaves us with a good feeling towards them. In this he was unconsciously portraying himself; see *Introduction*, p. 18.

72: 3. **Thought an accountant, etc.** Lamb here adapts a passage from Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*; the original remarks being applied to schoolmasters. In quite similar way he has adapted a passage from Thomas Fuller in the essay on *Christ's Hospital*; see 39: 25. — 12. **I know not who, etc.** Lamb's fondness for a little harmless mystification comes out here and in the foot-note, which was appended to the magazine article instead of the parenthesis. The "Mr. Lamb" here mentioned was his brother, John Lamb, who succeeded Tipp as accountant about 1806. He is spoken of by Elia as if he were a stranger. — 16. **First and second violoncellos, etc.** Lamb's list of instruments may be accumulated whimsically, or it may reflect the absurd idea of the make-up of an orchestra which most literary men seem to have. — 18. **Like Lord Midas.** It was Midas, King of Phrygia, whose ears were changed to those of an ass for passing a musical judgement that displeased Apollo. — 73: 18. **His life was formal.** In Tipp Lamb is portraying a man whose congenial element was the counting-room and its occupations; on the others the clerkship seems to sit less naturally. Music was merely his hobby, 72: 5, not, as was Lamb's literature, his relief from prosaism. — 27. **Used**

to give it a worse name. What this name was Lamb divulges, 74: 3, but characteristically of his tolerant heart, only to describe the justifiable side of the quality. The whole description of this untoward trait of Tippi's, beginning with "a sort of timidity," l. 26, is a good example of softened statement; compare note on 44: 7.—74: 14. Neither was it recorded of him, etc. To put this as the last detail, after such a list as is given in the preceding part of the sentence, and thus in one sudden turn to give a grandly redeeming feature by which we are to remember Tippi,—is it not a masterly stroke? He has left the hint open for it in l. 4.

75: 5. Such small politics. A fair summary of the essentially light-minded, not to say frivolous character of the man's literary work; "terse, fresh, epigrammatic, as alive,"—"some quirk that left a sting"; and yet occupied with the small talk of thought and events.

75: 9. A little of the sinister bend. The heraldic indication of illegitimacy. Though this is expressed in softened terms, Lamb seemed to have been mistaken both about this (Richard) Plumer and "his reputed author," old Walter Plumer. It was in the Plumer mansion in Blakesware that Lamb's grandmother Field was housekeeper; see *Dream-Children: A Revivèd*, p. 160. The mansion is described in the essay on *Blakesware in H—shire*. —21. Johnson's Life of Cave. A memoir of Edward Cave, publisher of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, which Dr. Johnson wrote on the occasion of his death in 1754. Lamb, it may be noted, quotes this case inaccurately, not as a wilful error, but in mere mistake.

76: 2. That song sung by Amlens. *As You Like It*, ii. 7, 174. The sentiment of the song is reported instead of quoted:—

"Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude."

—9. Mild, conciliatory, swan-like; this last epithet, which alludes to the proverbial swan's singing at its death, is fitted to the thought of his untimely ending; Lamb's megalomania is, "Maynard, hang'd himself."

76: 22. What if I have been playing with thee. In this final address to his reader warning the latter not to take him too seriously, Lucas thinks that "Lamb may suddenly have felt the misgiving that he had told too much, and therefore invented this sudden cross trail." I think rather that here at the close of his first Elia essay Lamb is taking occasion to hint at his literary procedure. The essay is not a piece of information, from which the reader may know the lives of Evans and Tame and Tipp and the rest, or the history of the South-Sea House; it is a literary study of types of character and a scene of melancholy decay,—a poetic invention, from which the reader must not expect to extract a certifiable residuum of fact. He has used real names; but he seeks to throw uncertainty even upon these, by comparing them to the names of old comrades which Christopher Sly recalled, in the Induction to the *Taming of the Shrew*, 2. 95, 96, when his companions are trying to persuade him that his drunken sleep has lasted fifteen years, and that no such persons ever existed. Something answering to these reminiscences has existed in actual fact; but the past has thrown its glamour over them; and their real value is in what they have for the soul.

OXFORD IN THE VACATION

PAGES 77-86.

In the previous essay, which is the first of the Elia papers, we read between the lines some hints of the kind of treatment we might expect in the series,—a treatment not matter of fact and informative, but discursive, imaginative, essentially poetical. In the present essay, Lamb hints at the character we are to think of in their creator: who this Elia is, through whose mind we are to look at life, and in whose tastes and sympathies we are to share. Thus the two essays together, like a kind of introduction to the Elia series, reveal in Lamb's delicate literary idiom, what we have noted in the first two sections of the *Introduction*; his life and livelihood

on the one hand, that of a clerk in the most prosaic task-work, and on the other hand, where his life's real interests lay—the inner world of the heart and the imagination, of thought and meditation, of which Oxford with its associations may be taken as the symbol.

It is worth noting, too, that just as, in order to transfigure the routine life that he has to live, he chooses to describe a mercantile house in which the real business is moribund or dead, so, in order to describe the kind of life that is most congenial to him and to which he gravitates, he chooses Oxford not in the full tide of university pursuits but in the vacation, when students and teachers are away and there is nothing left but the spirit of the place. It is the Oxford of his longings and his imagination that he describes.

It is thought that the impressions recorded in this essay were really gathered from a visit to Cambridge, and attributed to Oxford by Lamb's peculiar fancy for mystification. In 1819, a year before this essay was published in the *London Magazine*, he wrote at Cambridge a sonnet, of which in several ways this essay may be regarded as an expansion:—

"I was not train'd in Academic bowers,
And to those learned streams I nothing owe
Which copious from those twin fair founts do flow;
Mine have been anything but studious hours.
Yet can I fancy, wandering 'mid thy towers,
Myself a nursing, Granta, of thy lap;
My brow seems tightening with the Doctor's cap,
And I walk *gowned*; feel unusual powers.
Strange forms of logic clothe my admiring speech,
Old Rhenus' ghost is busy at my brain;
And my skull teems with notions infinite.
Be still, ye reeds of Camus, while I teach
Truths, which transcend the scorching Schoolmen's vein,
And half had stagger'd that stout Stagirite!"

In this sonnet he, a non-studious layman, feels the stimulus of academic thought, while in the essay he feels more the soothing

restfulness of academic leisure. There is no suggestion of the hard study which is associated with school and university life; but the essay is full of the atmosphere of learning, the habitual thinking of high things, which to a clerk on his vacation would be like immersion in another world.

77 : 1. **Casting a preparatory glance.** This opening sentence is a good one to study for its grammatical structure. Note that the subject of this participle is clearly expressed, and yet it is not emphasized either by prominent grammatical relation or by position in the clause. Note also how much parenthetical matter there is, and how he marks a parenthesis *within* a parenthesis by another manner of sign.—5. **A Vivares, or a Woollet,** eminent engravers, one a Frenchman, the other an Englishman, the men's names used for their work.

77 : 11. **The self-same college.** The word *college* is here used in the more general sense of collection, or order of people.—13. **Through a quill.** It may not be superfluous to note that Lamb's fantastic figure is built on the custom, universal in his day, of writing with quill pens, — now a nearly lost art.

77 : 15. **It is my humour, my fancy.** Note how, speaking as Elia, Lamb inverts the relative significance of his work. Assuming to be primarily a man of letters (l. 16), he treats the laborious task-work of his clerk's life as if it were recreation, and as if it made the literary life itself easier and more zestful. This is not wholly a whimsey of Lamb's; that there is something in it may be seen by the way in which Lamb's literary interests waned after, as a "superannuated man," he had all his time to himself; see pp. 173-176. In a similar way, in the essay on *Old China*, he makes Bridget Elia dwell on the greater zest in life and literature caused by the pinch of poverty; see p. 111 ff. The passage before us, if humorously ironical, yet reveals Lamb's disposition to make the best of a very monotonous and prosaic occupation.—78 : 4. **Essays.** Lamb italicizes this word to intimate that these very essays of Elia are written in the bits of time rescued from his

habitual occupation, and, as he puts it, enriched by his commercial recreations.

78 : 15. **Certain flaws . . . in this Joseph's vest.** The allusion, which is to Joseph's "coat of many colours," *Genesis* xxxvii. 3, derives its force from the fact that the coat was the mark of his father's special favour. He is still in the ironical assumption that the accountant's work was a recreatory favour granted by the employers, a kind of opportunity, which it takes a "cunning carper" to find less than perfect. — 20. **Red-letter days.** So called because, being days devoted to the more important saints, they were marked in the Prayer Book calendar by a red letter, had parts of the service especially devoted to them, and were observed accordingly as holidays. The number of these holidays during the year, as granted by the India House, was in 1820 reduced, so that from a considerable number the accountants were granted only five. It is this reduction that is here referred to as matter for regret. — 23. **Andrew and John**, etc. The names he gives here are, of course, the names of the more prominent saints. The poetic line here quoted seems to be an adaptation of Milton, *Paradise Regained*, ii. 7 : —

"Andrew and Simon, famous after known."

— 25. **As I was at school at Christ's.** The *whole-day-leaves* mentioned on 24 : 1, were given on these red-letter saints' days. — 26. **The old Baskett Prayer Book.** A standard edition of the Prayer Book named from its printers, the eldest of whom, John Baskett, died in 1742. Lamb launches here into one of his favourite moods of reminiscence, recalling things that were particularly vivid to his childish imagination. — 27. **Uneasy posture** refers to the crucifixion of Peter, which tradition says was head downward. St. Bartholomew, or "holy Bartlemy," was martyred by flaying alive. — 79 : 2. **Iscariot** is, of course, Judas Iscariot, to whom the "better Jude," two lines below, is contrasted. — 4. **Better Jude.** This Judas (not Iscariot, *John* xiv. 22) shared the same day with Simon; hence Lamb's regretful remark at one holiday the fewer.

—6. **Gaudy-day.** Does Lamb use this epithet in allusion to its being marked by a red letter?

79 : 9. "**Far off their coming shone.**" Lamb here adapts Milton, *Paradise Lost*, vi. 768: "Far off his coming shone;" said of the Son of God. The quotation enhances the reader's feeling of the eagerness with which holidays were anticipated, — a little inconsistent this, with Lamb's ironical praise of his work in a previous paragraph. — 16. **These holy tides.** The old word for *times*; obsolete now except in composition in such words as "spring-tide," "Christmas-tide," "Whitsuntide." This remark of Lamb's about judging their further observance to be superstition, refers to the abolition of them mentioned on 78 : 17. — 21. **No Selden, nor Archbishop Usher.** The mention of these names serves a double purpose: to identify these questions of ecclesiastical seasons with two great clerics and scholars whose distinction was to have been authorities in just such things; and to make transition to the subject of the present essay, *Oxford in the Vacation*. Note how skillfully this latter is done. — 24. **The mighty Bodley.** Sir Thomas Bodley (1545-1613), founder of the Bodleian Library at Oxford, where Elia represents himself as writing.

79 : 25. **Enact the student.** Not be, but play, the student; he who had been "defrauded in his young years" of a university career. In *Barbara S* — (see 59 : 25 f.) he mentions an impediment in speech which kept him from the pulpit and the actor's profession. It kept him also from becoming a Grecian at school (cf. 37 : 25 f.), which distinction generally carried with it a university course. So the clerk Elia is giving faithfully the feelings of Charles Lamb, as he visits the academic halls which he could not attend as student. — Note the climax with which, in the course of the paragraph, he passes through the different grades, — sizar, servitor, gentleman-commoner, master of arts, culminating in the quadrangle of Christ church, which is the largest and most imposing college in Oxford, and in seraphic Doctor (Doctor Seraphicus was the name given in the Middle Ages to St. Bonaventura, on account of the spiritual

beauty and fervency of his style), which is evidently intended to be the very culmination of learned distinction.

81 : 2. **Have cooked for Chaucer.** It is not known whether Chaucer ever attended a university; but he is mentioned here mainly to emphasize the age of the college kitchen furniture.

81 : 25. **What a place to be in.** Here Lamb falls into the same fanciful vein as in his meditations on the South-Sea House; read by the side of this paragraph the paragraph on p. 67. Both passages testify to his intense love of the past, and especially of the dead past, only the spirit, the poetical essence of which, remains. Note how, in accordance with this, he is not here to read the books or even to open them, nor to search into the MSS., but to "inhale learning" as if it were an odour. — 82 : 8. **Those sciential apples.** An allusion to the fruit of the tree of knowledge (the word *sciential* is intended to express merely the idea of *scientia*, knowledge), "amid the happy orchard," i.e. the Garden of Eden; see *Genesis* ii. 17; iii. 2.

82 : 11. **Do but disturb and unsettle my faith.** Lamb here continues his description of the aspect of learning that appeals to him, — the spirit of it rather than the letter. Various readings in manuscripts, which imply imperfection, are not to his taste. He would rather think that what the revered old authors wrote they wrote once for all, and perfectly. The "credit of the three witnesses," which he mentions to illustrate his sentiment, is an allusion to 1 *John* v. 7, "There are three that bear record in heaven," etc., which verse (omitted in the Revised Version) was in Lamb's time under vigorous discussion, and conclusively proved, especially by the great scholar Richard Porson, to be a spurious later addition. Such an upturning of venerable ideas was a disturbance to Lamb. He appended here, in the *London Magazine*, the following note: "There is something to me repugnant, at any time, in written hand. The text never seems determinate. Print settles it. I had thought of the *Lycidas* as of a full-grown beauty — as springing up with all its parts absolute — till, in evil hour, I was shown the original

written copy of it, together with the other minor poems of its author, in the library of Trinity, kept like some treasure to be proud of. I wish they had thrown them in the Cam, or sent them after the latter cantos of Spenser, into the Irish Channel. How it staggered me to see the fine things in their ore! interlined, corrected! as if their words were mortal, alterable, displaceable at pleasure! as if they might have been otherwise, and just as good! as if inspirations were made up of parts, and those fluctuating, successive, indifferent! I will never go into the workshop of any great artist again, nor desire a sight of his picture, till it is fairly off the easel; no, not if Raphael were to be alive again, and painting another Galatea." — 14. And to G. D. George Dyer (1755-1841), a personal friend of Lamb's, an earlier graduate of Christ's and a Grecian, whom he here sets by the side of the famous scholar Porson, and, devoting all the rest of the essay to him, describes as "a typical book-worm, the congenial inmate of such a place of 'mouldering learning'" (81 : 23) as this old library. It will be worth while, in reading these coming paragraphs, to note how exquisitely the character and occupation of the man are made to fit the place. — 15. A nook at Oriel, one of the older colleges in Oxford, in whose library the book-worm would be especially at home. — 16. To new-coat him in Russia, as if he were himself a book to be rebound. — 20. A tall Scapula. Johann Scapula's *Græcæ Lexicon*, type of a particularly dry and erudite book; and a tall, i.e. wide-margined copy, such as book-fanciers especially value.

81 : 24. Like a dove on the asp's nest. Lamb here indulges in one of his favourite contrasts; a man whose every thought is pure abstract learning, residing in Clifford's Inn, a place devoted to what Lamb calls "vermin of the law." Note how "fangs of the law" is chosen with reference to the figure which governs the passage. — 27. "In calm and sinless peace." The phrase is quoted from Milton, *Paradise Regained*, iv, 425.

83 : 12. These liberal pursuits. With all his admiration for G. D.'s scholarly tastes, it may be noted that Lamb attributes to him,

in the course of our college careers, the making of just the kind of thing which he would call "books that are no books"; cf. *Demosthenes on Books and Reading*, 116, 198. His admiration for our studies found its match in Newman's admiration for the grammar at the time *A Grammarian's Funeral* — 17. Anna Materna. Lamb says that these words, instead of meaning the Latin form of a mother, were, used by the ignorant language of the sciences, more exactly, his pronunciation and then taken as an expression that has become quite current to college students.

24-5. The most absent of men, i.e. absent-minded. Dyer, on account of his eccentricities, was a man whom Lamb and all his friends at once loved, despised, and laughed at. The story here given is drawn from a story which I saw; another story also, to the same effect, is another use of Lamb's essay, *Amicus Eddius*, which is entirely founded on a sketch of Dyer's. The essay begins "I do not know what I have experienced a stranger sensation, than coming out of a room (C. D.), who had been paying me a morning visit a few hours back, at my cottage at Islington, upon being leave instead of turning down the right-hand path by which he had entered — with staff in hand, and at noonday, deliberately turning right towards me the corner of the stream that runs by me, and thereby disappear;" — and then really thence for more the *Memoriae Lamb, Lycidas*, l. 30-31:—

"Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Closed up the head of your loved Lycidas?"

— 6. Our friend M. A. Hall Morrice, Q. C. (1770-1831), a lawyer, playwright and man of letters, one of the circle of friends which included Lamb, Macnamara, and Coleridge. — 14. Like a Queen Lear. A being created by Lamb from the Roman household drama, the *Lear* and *Perseus*. — With pretty A. S. A Miss Anne Thompson, afterwards Mrs. Bryan Walter Foster. — 22. Like another Boats. A character, or rather two characters, just alike, in Plautus's comedy *Amphitruon*, a comedy of errors.

ANNA'S OF LAMB — 14

84 : 27. (Not to speak it profanely). Lamb puts in the saving parenthesis because he is quoting, in a semi-humorous spirit, a very sacred passage of Scripture ; see 2 *Corinthians* v. 8.—85 : 2. Starts like a thing surprised. Here Lamb, as was not infrequently the case, fuses together two quotations into one : Wordsworth in *Intimations of Immortality*, stanza ix, has

“ Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised ; ”

and Shakespeare, in *Hamlet*, i. 1. 148, has

“ Started like a guilty thing.”

—7. To be done to thee thyself. Note a thing quite like what was noted in the *South-Sea House* essay (see 74 : 14 and note), that Lamb dismisses the friends he describes with a turn of laudation, and for even their failings and absurdities has a converse of ample extenuation. We have been laughing at G. D. in the early part of the paragraph ; here we can only accord him reverence and respect.

85 : 10. D. commenced life, etc. The succeeding two paragraphs, which describe D.'s personal peculiarities and especially privations, were deemed by a certain W. K. too personal, and accordingly were omitted from the book edition. To W. K.'s criticism Lamb gave as his reason for writing in this strain of a friend he so highly honoured, that “ it was only from the conviction that the public, in living subjects especially, do not endure pure panegyric.” This gives Lamb's idea of literary effect and shading ; whether it is open to criticism as calculated to wound sensibilities, the reader may judge.—25. Agar's wish. See *Proverbs* xxx. 8. The scripture form of the name is Agur ; it has been suggested that in using this form Lamb perpetuates a mistake of Defoe's ; possibly he used the form by preference.

86 : 2. Wasting his fine erudition. In the succeeding description of G. D.'s kind of work Lamb gives a masterly description of the literary hack, such as in England is associated with the name

Grub Street; but at the same time does justice to his solid and valuable services to literature and learning. See note, 83:12.

86:25. The waters of Damascus. A rather crooked reference to Naaman's remonstrance, 2 *Kings* v. 12, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" — 26 f. The Shepherds . . . the Delectable Mountains . . . the Interpreter . . . the House Beautiful, are persons and scenes from *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

POOR RELATIONS

PAGES 87-96

The essays thus far read have been to a large extent autobiographical; that is, beginning with scenes and experiences of childhood, they have conducted us through Lamb's schooling and subsequent entrance upon his clerkship; until in *Oxford in the Vacation* we see Elia as a clerk gravitating as if by irresistible nature to the scenes of learning and scholarly contemplation which were Lamb's true element. With the present essay, as mentioned in the *Introduction* (see p. 19), begins a series of papers, selections VII to XIII, which "form a somewhat like-minded group, giving a kind of description of Lamb's ruling tastes and sympathies." All of them are notable, among other things, for the extraordinary delicacy of portraiture, especially of the finer shadings of tastes, sympathies, character.

The present essay is notable, especially in the first three paragraphs, for the lightness of its touch. Every sentence needs to be read not only for what it says but for the delicate allusion or antithesis or insinuation that it contains. This is materially aided by the peculiar punctuation that Lamb employs, notably his copious use of the dash, which conveys a fine shade of meaning well worth studying out.

87:1. A Poor Relation — is, etc. Note that this whole paragraph is punctuated wholly by the dash and comma, and consists

merely of the grammatical subject and a long series of predicates. This first dash (without comma) simply sets them off by themselves. Some more modern editions, thinking to improve on Lamb's way of writing, remove these dashes, leaving only the commas; but this (as you can see by trying it) would only make the predicates a catalogue of things, which is just what Lamb would avoid. They do not accumulate traits of the Poor Relation; they simply give detached, as it were casual touches, each containing some felicitous description. — **The most irrelevant thing in nature.** This description is inclusive, giving the key to all the rest. Note how each predicate contains some incongruity of terms, or irrelevancy, some conjunction of things that do not naturally go together. — 8. **A rebuke to your rising.** It may be noted that this sentiment about poor relations, on which this essay is founded, is more acute in England than in America, because there the lines of class and social position are more closely drawn, and more intensified by immemorial tradition. — 9. **A death's head at your banquet.** An allusion to an ancient custom of introducing a skeleton at a feast, to remind the company of their mortality. For a good example of this, see *Cena Trimalchionis*, by Petronius, where Trimalchio sets a small skeleton before his guests. — 10. **Agathocles' pot.** The pot would be a reminder to Agathocles, tyrant of Syracuse, that he was the son of a potter. — **Mordecai**, a despised Jew in the gate of Shushan the palace (*Esther* iii. 2), and **Lazarus**, the beggar laid at the rich man's gate (*Luke* xvi. 20), convey an obvious implication. — The succeeding phrases are many of them adaptations of scripture expressions or situations; viz. **a lion**, *Proverbs* xxvi. 13; **a frog**, *Exodus* viii. 3; **a fly**, *Ecclesiastes* x. 1; **a mote**, *Matthew* vii. 3; **one thing**, etc., *Luke* x. 42 (which Lamb negatives); **the hail in harvest**, *Proverbs* xxvi. 1. *Psalms* lxxviii. 47. All these are scripture examples of some sort of anomaly or incongruity.

87 : 16. **Known by his knock.** As this is amplified in the next two sentences, it is a good instance of Lamb's delicacy of description; in a way, too, it gives the key-note of the whole paragraph.

Note the function of the dash (here without the comma) in this paragraph; it always introduces a sly turn of thought which contains the point of the antithetic description. Note, also, in each sentence, how the description is so turned as to suggest a stab to the host's pride.—89 : 17. Rid of two nuisances, that is, the chair and the Poor Relation.

89 : 19. And that is—a female Poor Relation. A third use of the dash may here be noted; it delays the predicate, and so calls more attention to it. The same thing may be seen in the first and last sentences, respectively, of the essay.—Note the disparagement conveyed in the words *female* and *she-relative*, l. 22.—90 : 5. Most provokingly humble. Note how the details of this paragraph illustrate this trait; and consider the shade of difference in character between the female Poor Relation and the male described in the previous paragraph. The humility furnishes perhaps the key.—15. Mistaken the piano for a harpsichord. The harpsichord was the predecessor of the piano, but a humbler and inferior instrument, such as a Poor Relation would remember from less prosperous days.

90 : 17. Richard Amlet, Esq., in the play. The play is *The Confederacy*, by Sir John Vanburgh. In his essay *On Some of the Old Actors*, Lamb mentions this character in connection with the acting of John Palmer, with whom the part was a favourite: "Jack in Dick Amlet was insuperable."—91 : 1. An Amlet in real life . . . Poor W——. In a *Key* which Lamb furnished with his characters, he identifies W—— with Favell, who "left Cambridge because he was ashamed of his father, who was a house-painter there." Favell has already been mentioned in the essay on *Christ's Hospital* (see 41 : 2), where he is said to have been "ill capable of enduring the slights poor Sizars are sometimes subject to in our seats of learning."—15. To elude notice. It will be remembered that Christ's Hospital was a charity-school, so that any notice that the scholars attracted in "this sneering and prying metropolis" would be keenly felt by such a boy as W——, as directed to a charity-

boy.—21. **Aversion from.** We more frequently say "aversion *to*." Query: Is there a difference of shade in meaning which makes the preposition *from* more suitable here?—23. **With Nessian venom.** An allusion to the shirt poisoned with the blood of the Centaur Nessus, which wrought the death of Hercules.—24. **Latimer, . . . and . . . Hooker,** who became eminent in English history and letters, were servitors at the university.—93 : 8. **The Artist Evangelist,** that is, St. Luke (see l. 12), who by tradition is said to have been a painter, and to have painted a picture of the Virgin Mother.—13. **Knew his mounted sign.** In Milton, *Paradise Lost*, iv. 1013, which passage Lamb here adapts, it is

"The Fiend looked up, and knew
His mounted scale aloft; not more; but fled
Murmuring;"

In Milton the golden scales, displayed in the heavens, showed, by the representation of Satan in the lighter one, that the decree was against him; here a similar suggestion is conveyed by the "mounted sign."

93 : 23. **The earliest impressions.** It may be noted with what zest Lamb turns, in illustrating almost any subject, to scenes and impressions of his childhood.—94 : 9. **At Lincoln.** The Lambs came originally from Lincolnshire; and in Lincoln there are still traces of the social gulf, or antipathy, between the two parts of the town.—10. **The Mint . . . the Tower.** The buildings of the British Mint are on Tower Hill; so the two would, in a child's mind, be associated together in the same mysterious impression.—29. **The code of these young Grotiuses.** Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), an eminent early Dutch philosopher, wrote a work entitled *De Jure Belli et Pacis*; from which title Lamb takes the suggestion of his epithet.—95 : 19. **The viand, which I have already mentioned.** See 94 : 5; the sweet pudding which was perhaps a bit of old-time fare from the days when the relations had lived together in Lincolnshire.—22. **My aunt.** An aunt Hetty,

whose real name was Sarah Lamb. She is the relative mentioned in the essay on *Christ's Hospital* (see 22: 22); and her character is described somewhat at length in the essay on *My Relations*, second paragraph. She is there described as a "steadfast, friendly being," "with some little asperities in her constitution," being "one whom single blessedness had soured to the world." The mixture of kindness and asperity comes out perceptibly here. — 96: 3. John Billet. The fact that Lamb gives the name in full would suggest, in his case, that it is not the man's real name. — 14. This was — a Poor Relation. It may be noted, as we think back over this last paragraph, how Lamb's kindliness of feeling seems to soften the satire of the opening paragraph of the essay. There was wit and point, but no bitterness in his satire.

IMPERFECT SYMPATHIES

PAGES 97-108

The present essay, besides the intimate light it throws on Lamb's temperament and character, furnishes a good occasion for studying the developement of an idea into an essay; and this because the structure of this essay as a whole is of the simplest type. It consists merely of an opening paragraph which propounds and accurately discriminates the idea he would treat, and then four concrete illustrations drawn from Scotchmen, Jews, negroes, and Quakers, each contained in a single paragraph, except the last, which has two paragraphs, one of discrimination and one of illustration. It will be a good study to verify this simple structure; also to note how naturally the idea grows from one illustrative example to another. The writer begins with those who are farthest away from his sympathies, those whom he cannot like, though he has always tried to do so; and the ground of his antipathy is the difference in intellect. Then he goes on to those for whom he has, "in the abstract, no disrespect," but in describing them defines imperfect sympathy from a new point of view, or rather of feeling,

namely, racial antipathy. The third he passes briefly and lightly over; people for whom he has "felt yearnings of tenderness," but his imperfect sympathy with them has a physical ground. Finally, he takes for illustration a class for whom he has positive love, respect, veneration, yet finds an insuperable moral or rather spiritual ground for not identifying his sympathies fully with them. All this furnishes a valuable study in the literary development of an idea from its simpler and plainer to its most minute and intimate aspects; and it is recommended that the student go through the essay with this thought of its orderly development in view.

Note first the use that Lamb makes of the quotation which serves as his motto. It is not employed, as mottoes generally are, to embody his thought, but rather as something from which he disents; that is, as a point of departure. So used, however, it serves all the better the purpose he has in mind, namely, to make a somewhat fine and subtle discrimination, to define his term, imperfect sympathies, down to exact limits.

97 : 2. **Antipathy, or rather idiosyncrasy.** Sir Thomas Browne evidently makes a shade of distinction between these words; look them up and see if you can tell what it is. Perhaps the rest of the motto will help determine.

97 : 6. **The author of the Religio Medici.** Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682), an author from whom Lamb could with the more grace quote his motto because he was a man of whom, for his strongly marked and rather eccentric personality, Lamb was very fond; see *Introduction*, p. 12. — 10-11. In the essay on *Mackery End in Hertfordshire* (43: 10) he speaks of "the beautiful obliquities of the Religio Medici." The philosophical words and phrases of these lines are a half-whimsical imitation of Browne's style. — 11. **Admired.** This word is not used so much in our modern sense of esteeming highly, as in the older and rarer sense of wonder at. In the next sentence, indeed, the words *wondered at* are taken up as a synonym and definition. — 16. *Standing on earth, etc.* from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, vii. 23, where, however, Milton has *pole*

for *sky*. Lamb had a way of adapting quotations to suit his context, thus making them more fitting and pertinent; see note on 93 : 12. — 17. **National or individual.** Note that these words cover the ground of Lamb's illustrations of imperfect sympathies; Scotchmen and Jews are judged on national and racial grounds, Quakers on individual temperament. The original title of this essay in the *London Magazine* was: *Jews, Quakers, Scotchmen and other Imperfect Sympathies*. — 23. **Sympathies, apathies, antipathies.** It has been mentioned in the foot-note how these words run a perfect scale of meaning, comprising, so to say, the whole range of elemental feelings. This essay is a description of personal feelings, almost or quite apart from reasoned logic. For *apathies*, Lamb's original essay had *dispathies*, — rarer, and somewhat less accurate in implication. — 98 : 3. **The more purely English word, i.e. fellow,** in l. 6.

99 : 3. **An order of imperfect intellects,** the writer ranges himself under that order, not from a rhetorical self-depreciation, but as a real distinction. In the sense in which he sets himself over against the Scotch mind his intellect can be called imperfect. The whole distinction turns on this contrast of perfect (that is, completely ordered) and imperfect; study this and get the distinction clear. The succeeding lines are a progressive amplification of the contrast. — 14. **Essays,** that is, trials or attempts. — 100 : 2. **The brain of a true Caledonian.** Here begins the second member of the contrast; note how much clearer it comes out for the preparation that has been made for it. — 4. **His Minerva is born in panoply.** An allusion to the familiar myth that Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, sprang from the head of Jupiter fully grown and armed. The figure here is not only a pleasant but the briefest way of conveying Lamb's idea of a Scotchman's intellect. — 14. **You cannot cry halves,** that is, the Scotch mind is not so constituted as to share with others in the inception of an idea; it must be all his or none. — 101 : 5. **Upon the square.** Lamb uses this phrase as just about synonymous with *literally*, and defines it further by contrast in the

next sentence, about *metaphor*. — 8. **John Bunce.** The reference is to a book by Thomas Amory (1691(?)–1788), entitled *The Life of John Bunce, Esq.*, a book published in 1756 and 1766, and apparently much prized by Lamb. It is mentioned in his essay on *The Two Races of Men*. — 15. **A print . . . after Leonardo da Vinci.** The picture of Da Vinci's called *The Virgin of the Rocks*. Both Lamb and his sister wrote verses on the picture. — 27. **Affirm, as annunciate it.** Study the shade of distinction between these two, and how it applies to the Scotchmen that Lamb is thinking of. — 102 : 15. **A passionate fondness.** There are several instances on record indicating Lamb's liking for Burns; but in his original essay, after the words (103 : 2) "that you can admire him," Lamb added : "I have a great mind to give up Burns. There is certainly a bragging spirit of generosity, a swaggering assertion of independence, and *all that*, in his writings." — 103 : 2. **Thomson.** James Thomson (1700–1748), a Scotchman, author of *The Seasons*, a book for which Lamb had an affection, preferring it, as he says in his *Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading* (120 : 6), "a little torn, and dog's eared." — 3. **Smollett.** Tobias George Smollett (1721–1771), a Scotch writer, principally of fiction. Rory (school-boy name for Roderick Random) and his companion Strap, in the novel of *Roderick Random*, were not so portrayed as to flatter the Scotch pride. David Hume, the historian and philosopher (1711–1776), was also a Scotchman, whose unfinished history of England was continued, with indifferent success, by Smollett. *Humphry Clinker* is the name of another of Smollett's principal novels.

103 : 10. **No disrespect for Jews.** See the introductory note to this essay. Note the gradation between his feeling for this class of people and his feeling for Scotchmen. He has tried to like the latter but cannot; for these he has "in the abstract, no disrespect," but he cannot bring himself to be "in habits of familiar intercourse" with any of them. It is a matter of personal taste, not of reasoned theory. — 12. **Stonehenge**, so ancient that its purpose and uses are unknown, is the typical English piece of prehistoric antiquity:

hence its pertinence here as a term of comparison. — 16. **The story of Hugh of Lincoln.** The legendary story of a small boy of Lincoln who was tortured to death by the Jews. A fringe of miracle, in the popular version, gathered round the story. — 21. **Kindly.** In Lamb's use of this word here, it seems to retain much of its old meaning of *naturally*. The words *kind* and *kin* are from the same source; we have the original sense in the word *mankind*; so here the original sense is embodied in the word, with perhaps something of its more modern sense of *amiably*. — 24. **A Hebrew.** Except here Lamb has used the term *Jew*. The word *Hebrew* seems rather to connote their race and temperamental traits; the word *Jew*, a little more their religion. — 104 : 10. **A wet Quaker.** As the Quakers reject the Christian sacraments, a Quaker who retained baptism would be an anomaly comparable to the moderate or Christianizing Jew. — 11. **B—— would have been, etc.** John Braham (1774(?)–1856) (the name Braham shortened from Abraham) was a very famous singer of Lamb's time, whom Lamb greatly admired. In one of his letters Lamb writes of him: "He was a rare composition of the Jew, the gentleman, and the angel; yet all these elements mixed up so kindly in him that you could not tell which preponderated." The criticism of him here is not lack of admiration; it rather deplors his proselytism to Christianity, and wants him "more in keeping" with the original bent of his race. The sentiment of self-consistency in character and action was strong in Lamb; the quality is praised and illustrated in his essay on *Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist*. Of her strenuous way of playing at cards he says, "It was her business, her duty, the thing she came into the world to do, — and she did it." — 15. **Cannot conquer the Shibboleth.** An allusion to the test by which the Gileadites were separated from the Ephraimites; see *Judges* xii. 5, 6. "And it was so, that when any of the fugitives of Ephraim said, 'Let me go over,' the men of Gilead said unto him, 'Art thou an Ephraimite?' If he said, 'Nay'; then said they unto him, 'Say now Shibboleth'; and he said, 'Sibboleth'; for he could not frame to pronounce it right:

then they laid hold on him, and slew him at the fords of the Jordan."—16. "The children of Israel," etc. An aria from Handel's oratorio of *Israel in Egypt*.—105 : 3. Jael had, etc. It was Jael who (see *Judges* iv. 18-21), first inviting the Canaanite general, Sisera, into her tent and giving him drink, then murdered him in his sleep. Such treachery of character could be hid by "those full dark inscrutable eyes," which Lamb makes typical of the Hebrew female physiognomy.

105 : 5. Yearnings of tenderness. See note introductory to this essay. Lamb's feeling toward negroes, in the abstract, is still stronger than in previous cases; yet his antipathy is simpler and more elemental; which he dismisses in briefest terms,—"because they are black."—8. What Fuller beautifully calls. Thomas Fuller was one of Lamb's favourite quaint authors. It is from Fuller that he quotes and adapts the simile of the Spanish great galleon and the English man-of-war in *Christ's Hospital*; see 40 : 1-8. Fuller's principal work was his *Worthies of England*; the metaphor here quoted is from his *Holy and Profane State*, in a chapter on "The Good Sea Captain."

105 : 12. Quaker ways, and Quaker worship. In these last described Lamb's sentiment of respect and admiration reaches its highest; and the corresponding ground for his imperfect sympathy is by so much the finer drawn and delicate, though not less real. His ground of admiration for the Quaker worship is given, almost without any abating criticism, in his essay on *A Quaker's Meeting*; in which, with somewhat unusual intensity of emotion, he says, "O when the spirit is sore fretted, even tired to sickness of the janglings, and nonsense-noises of the world, what a balm and a solace it is, to go and seat yourself, for a quiet half-hour, upon some undisputed corner of a bench, among the gentle Quakers!"—18. (*As Desdemona* would say), the passage of *Othello* which gives what *Desdemona* did say (i. 3. 249) is:—

"That I did love the Moor to live with him,
My downright violence and storm of fortunes
May trumpet to the world."

—25. (According to Evelyn). John Evelyn (1620-1706), who is principally known from his *Diary*, which ranks with *Pepyer's Diary* for importance. The present reference, however, is to a point of his mental structure: a *Discourse of Solitude*.—26. My guests. Lamb uses this word partly as a synonym for *appetites* (24), and partly to discriminate the warmer and animal aspect of what we express by the word *needs*.—27. To sit a guest, etc., the passage of *Pierre des Repueux* (16 277) which Lamb quotes and adapts to:—

"Sitting thus with Elijah he pursued,
Or as a guest with Daniel at his palace,"

see also *Daniel* 5, 12.

1871-3. He knows that his syllables are weighed. With this association in mind, it will be worth while to look back over the paragraph and see how accurately Lamb discriminates between the Quaker's exactness in expression and his alleged inflexibility. It is a good example of Lamb's fitness both in the use of language and in the discrimination of moral values.—7. A more correct example. Lamb's reference is generally to the way Jesus (must) disvalue the Pharisees and others who tried to entangle him in his words; see examples in *Matthew* xvi, 23-27; xiii, 31-33.—18. To Penn. William Penn (1644-1718), the founder of Pennsylvania, who was prominent among the English Quakers. The passage here quoted is recorded of a trial of William Penn and William Mead for receiving deserters, and is given in *Swedish History of the People called Quakers*.—22. I was travelling . . . with three male Quakers. We may here remind ourselves that it is *Ella*, an animal character, and not Lamb, who follows these Quakers; for this incident of the three Quakers did not happen to Lamb, but was related to him by the surgeon, Sir Anthony Carlisle. The assumed character of *Ella* is free to appropriate incidents and experiences as if they were his own.—28 : 7. And formally tendered it. Consider how this act, with its animal character, what Lamb is describing, the Quakers' assumption

of speech. — 26. A soporific on my moral feeling. Is this "moral feeling," which will awake again, the secret of Lamb's imperfect sympathy with Quakers? It will be noted that by the time he reaches the end of the essay his *sympathy* deviates but very slightly from the class he describes; that is, is so little *imperfect* that he justifies it only on ground of personal sentiment, hardly more than a whim.

OLD CHINA

PAGES 109-117

In this essay Lamb returns to his favourite strain of reminiscence. The title is chosen much as was the subject of *Mackery End, in Hertfordshire* (p. 42), not so much to designate what the essay is about, as to furnish an occasion for the autobiographical reflection which is his real object. In other ways, too, this essay may read as a kind of pendant to *Mackery End, in Hertfordshire*; it carries on and completes the account of Bridget Elia (*i.e.* Mary Lamb) which that essay begins.

It will be noted, as regards the construction of this essay, that the matter suggested by the title is carried on as far as 110: 12, when by a natural and graceful transition the writer launches into his reminiscence; which then proceeds for its own sake until the very last sentence, 117: 20, makes a kind of farewell bow to the subject before dismissing it.

109: 2. When I go to see any great house. In his essay on *Blakesmoor in H——shire* Lamb describes his visit to "the deserted apartments of [a] fine old family mansion." The main interest of such a visit, for him, seemed to be in the sentiments and fancies it called up from the past; it will be recalled, too, what meditations of that kind were suggested by the South-Sea House, see p. 65, second paragraph. — 3. Next for the picture gallery. In *Blakesmoor in H——shire*, the picture gallery is thus described, "Mine was that gallery of good old fam-

ily portraits, which as I have gone over, giving them in fancy my own family name, one — and then another — would seem to smile, reaching forward from the canvas, to recognize the new relationship; while the rest looked grave, as it seemed, at the vacancy in their dwelling, and thoughts of fiend posterity." All this, as we see, is in the strain of sentiment in which Lamb delighted, and which indeed characterizes the present essay. — 7. **The first play.** Recall the essay on *My First Play*, p. 50.

109 : 14. **That world before perspective.** In the Chinese art as seen in the decoration of tea-cups the relative size and shading of objects due to various distances is disregarded; hence the absurdities in position and posture humorously described in the succeeding paragraphs. It is with a sly irony that he speaks of what "the decorous artist, to prevent absurdity" (l. 19), has done; for to prevent one the artist has fallen into another absurdity. The irony of this whole description of Old China consists in giving the effects of the crude art as if they were the results of skilled and intended work.

111 : 1. **These summer clouds in Bridget,** that is, in his sister, Mary Lamb, whom he is really describing under the name of his cousin Bridget Elia. The "passing sentiment" which he here calls a summer cloud turns out to be an access of sound sentiment about the comforts of comparative poverty, which corresponds well with the remark he has already made of her in *Mackery End, in Hertfordshire*: "That which was good and venerable to her, when a child, retains its authority over her mind still. She never juggles or plays tricks with her understanding" (43 : 21).

111 : 17. **The brown suit.** Wordsworth, in *A Poet's Epitaph*, thus describes Lamb: —

"But who is he, with modest looks,
And clad in homely russet brown?
He murmurs near the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own."

For twenty years, in the India House, it is said, Lamb wore a snuff-colored suit; and thereafter wore black, and had somewhat the

appearance of a clergyman. In his essay on *The Wedding*, he thus speaks of his habit of wearing black: "She (one of the guests at the wedding) was pleased to say that she had never seen a gentleman before me give away a bride in black. Now black has been my ordinary apparel so long — indeed I take it to be the proper costume of an author — the stage sanctions it — that to have appeared in some lighter colour would have raised more mirth at my expense, than the anomaly had created censure." — 19. **That folio Beaumont and Fletcher.** In his *Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading* (121 : 25) Lamb writes: "On the contrary, I cannot read Beaumont and Fletcher but in Folio. The Octavo editions are painful to look at. I have no sympathy with them." Lamb's copy of Beaumont and Fletcher, a folio, still exists, enriched with penciled MS. notes by Coleridge, to whom he had lent it. — 25. Islington, now included in London, was then a suburban place; though the Lambs seemed then to have lived in Pentonville, near the Islington boundary. — 112 : 6. **Those neat black clothes.** See note on 111 : 17.

112 : 18. **That print after Leonardo.** The Lambs gave it a name to suit themselves; it is a print ordinarily known as *Modesty and Vanity*. Mary Lamb wrote a poem on it.

113 : 9. **As Izaak Walton has described,** in his *Complete Angler* (1653), a delightful book, rather of gentle literary flavour than of sport. The reference to *Piscator* and *Trout Hall*, below, is to Cotton's continuation of the book.

113 : 23. **Where it was we used to sit, when we saw, etc.** As soon as he approaches the subject of the theatre Lamb betrays his keen interest in plays and players, an interest which makes every reminiscence connected with them vivid. *The Battle of Hexham* and *The Surrender of Calais* were plays by George Colman the Younger (1762–1836). *The Children in the Wood*, by Thomas Morton, which was a favourite of Lamb's, is mentioned in *Barbara S—* (58 : 3), and an incident connected with Miss Kelly's acting in it as a child is given (61 : 7–18). Of Bannister's

("Jack Bannister's") acting in this play he says, in *On Some of the Old Actors*, "Your whole conscience stirred with Bannister's performance of Walter in *The Children in the Wood*."

115 : 6. **What I call a treat.** The language all along here is as natural and common as if it came without effort; but note, in the amplification of this definition, how accurately chosen and followed out the distinctions are.

116 : 3. **As you used to quote it, etc.** The whole poem from which this phrase is taken, a poem by Charles Cotton, entitled *The New Year*, is quoted in Lamb's essay on *New-Year's Eve*. The couplet in which the phrase occurs runs thus:—

"Then let us welcome the New Guest
With lusty brimmers of the best,"

116 : 10. **A rhetorical vein.** The word rhetorical is used not in the sense often given to it, of artificial or high-sounding, but nearly the same as fluent, or perhaps imaginative; see l. 12. — 23. **Those natural dilations of the youthful spirit.** What has been described in the essay that can be given this name? — 117 : 5. **Bannister and Mrs. Bland, see 113 : 25. — 20. That merry little Chinese waiter, etc.** In coming back for a sentence to the subject named in the title, is Lamb slyly poking fun at the situation of these two at their tea, and the patronizing tone he has taken upon himself to use in his answer to her? Good literature is full of such delicate suggestions.

DETACHED THOUGHTS ON BOOKS AND READING

PAGES 118-126

In this essay, which, though appearing in *Last Essays of Elia*, was one of his earlier written ones, Lamb reveals his tastes in reading, and indirectly much of his humorous and whimsical, yet, on the whole, soundly sensible, character. Behind the light vein of irony one can read in his words the natural *feeling* that one has

for literature which engages the imagination and sympathies, as distinguished from the books that give information or that aim to enforce belief and conduct. In short, the books that Lamb mentions with liking are such books, mainly old ones, as contain most of the vein which Lamb has reproduced in his essays, books whose spirit he has assimilated. In the words of Bernard Barton's sonnet to Elia, —

" From the olden time
Of Authorship thy Patent should be dated,
And thou with Marvel, Browne, and Burton, mated."

The title *Detached Thoughts* puts aside all pretensions to an ordered and planned essay; the piece is like notes put down as they occurred, without connexion or progress. The original essay in the *London Magazine* was marked "To be continued," but Lamb did not resume the subject.

118 : 4. **The Relapse.** A comedy by Sir John Vanbrugh (about 1666-1726). This motto gives expression to just such a conceit as would take Lamb; he mentions this particular quotation no fewer than three times in his letters and works.

118 : 13. **I cannot sit and think.** This is a half true description of Lamb's type of mind; he was not adapted to the severe and studious thinking which is implied in research or philosophy, and in this sense he could not "sit and think." At the same time, it was only half true that he loved "to lose himself in other men's minds." Rather he found himself there; that is, his books (the congenial ones) set him thinking, in that seeming desultory but really creative way which he has described in *Imperfect Sympathies*; see 99 : 6-100 : 2. Thus, for him, his favourite books were what Emerson says books are essentially for, to the scholar, namely, for "nothing but to inspire." It was merely in this sense that books thought for him.

118 : 15. **Shaftesbury . . . Jonathan Wild.** These two are mentioned as marking the extremes of his taste, and whimsically assumed to cover the whole range of legitimate books. In his

essay on *The Genteel Style in Writing*, Lamb mentions "the inflated finical rhapsodies of Shaftesbury," as if the latter were a type of the spurious genteel style, contrasted with "the plain natural chit-chat of Temple," who represents the truly genteel. Over against this extreme he sets *Jonathan Wild*, not an author but a book: Fielding's *Life of Jonathan Wild the Great*, who is portrayed as the type of a thorough-going scoundrel, great in evil and crime.

118 : 19. Books which are no books. In this class, besides the playful catalogue of the first clause, Lamb names generally such books as do not come under the title of *belles-lettres*; books of a ponderous and unimaginative nature, or such as young people now-a-days call "poky." Hume, Gibbon, and Robertson were the historians of repute in Lamb's day, and are indeed still standard in their way; Beattie was a minor poet, then accounted major, author of *The Minstrel*, and Soame Jenyns, a now forgotten author of works of philosophical inquiry. Flavius Josephus, author of *Jewish Antiquities* and *The History of the Jewish War*, was a Jewish historian of the first century A.D., an authority much depended on for Biblical and Jewish history. Paley's *Moral Philosophy*, by the very title, excludes itself from Lamb's reading sympathies; as a matter of fact Paley's works were written in eminently clear and readable style, and in Lamb's day were in their religious and philosophical way standard. — 119 : 4. With these exceptions. It will be noted that for weighty reading, excluding as they do scientific, historical, and philosophical works almost *in toto*, the list of exceptions is somewhat formidable. — 5. A taste so catholic (*i.e.* universal). The playful irony of the remark is accentuated by the thought of the books he excludes.

119 : 7. Things in books' clothing. The phrase is of course modelled on the *Æsop* fable of the wolf in sheep's clothing. — 12. What "seem its leaves." This phrase is an adaptation of Milton's description of the monstrous shape in *Paradise Lost*, li. 672:

* What seemed his head

The likeness of a kingly crown had on."

— 13. **A withering Population Essay.** Lamb wrote just as the thinkers of England were making inquiries in principles of economics and social conditions, a kind of writing which since then has developed an enormous literature. The allusion here is to Malthus's *Essay on Population*, written 1798, a book which has had great influence in its sphere, but is of course typical of a kind of reading to which Lamb had a hearty antipathy. — 14. **Steele . . . Farquhar . . . Adam Smith.** These contrasted names simply carry out Lamb's contrast of literary types. Steele (1672-1729), a contemporary of Addison and associated with him in the graceful essay writing of *The Spectator*, is also mentioned by Lamb as the author of a comedy, *The Funeral*; Farquhar (1678-1707), one of the Restoration playwrights, author of *The Beaux' Stratagem* and other comedies; — these are to Lamb's taste; while Adam Smith (1723-1790), who as author of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), which is one of the classics of economic science, would be to his distaste and disappointment. — 15. **Blockheaded encyclopædias.** The names of encyclopædias here given are the old-time predecessors of such works as our *Encyclopædia Britannica* and *The New International Encyclopædia*. Lamb calls them blockheaded simply because they are works of information and reference, and have no juice of imaginative interest in them. — 19. **Paracelsus . . . and . . . Raymund Lully** were old-time alchemists and philosophers, who would interest Lamb from the very quaintness and obsolescence of their speculations. Paracelsus (1493-1541), a German doctor of medicine, whose real name was Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, wrote on such medical matters as the Elixir of Life in that mystical vein which characterized the alchemists. Browning has made him the subject of one of his greater poems. Raymond Lully (1235-1315), an alchemist and philosopher who sought the philosopher's stone, was in his time known as Doctor Illuminatus. — 22. **My ragged veterans.** Lamb's library was picked up largely from book stalls, and consisted of copies or editions that had some unique rarity or oddity to

commend them. The way he obtained them is exemplified in the account of his Beaumont and Fletcher in the essay on *Old China*, see 111 : 20 ff. Of his books Crabbe Robinson writes: "Such a number of first-rate works in very bad condition is, I think, nowhere to be found." And Leigh Hunt wrote of his library: "It looks like what it is, a selection made at precious intervals from the book stalls."

119 : 23. **Strong-backed and neat-bound.** This desideratum of binding is the inclusive quality which covers all the rest, and as here mentioned is practical and prosaic; but as the paragraph is carried out the qualities of binding suitable for various types of literature become almost poetic for the delicate stress of the dress to the nature of the volume. The ability to describe a book with all the discrimination and sympathy that he would give to a person is an instance of his extraordinary intimacy of feeling. — 120 : 17. **Some Lethean cup.** Allusion to the river Lethe in the underworld, whose waters conferred forgetfulness.

120 : 23. **Great Nature's Stereotypes.** The art of stereotyping the pages of a book, and thus preserving the plates already set up and corrected, was new enough in Lamb's day to furnish a striking illustration of these "perpetually self-reproductive volumes." — 121 : 1. **We know not where, etc.** As usual, Lamb's quotation (here from *Orlando*, v. 2. 12) is slightly inexact. The original goes: —

"I know not where is that Prometheus' hear
That can thy light consume."

— 3. **Life of the Duke of Newcastle, by his Duchess.** This book, or at least the writer of it, was a great favourite of Lamb's; the ground of his liking seeming to be not so much the excellence as the eccentricity of the quaint writer. See 43 : 13, and note thereon. She seemed to be a kind of epitome of the qualities in which Lamb delighted. A contemporary writes of Eliza: "Sir Thomas Browne was a 'bosom friend' of his — so was Barton, and old Fuller. In his amorous vein he dabbled with that peerless duchess of many-told colour; and with the hey-day comedies of Beaumont and Fletcher he induced light dreams."

121 : 20. **Without pretending, etc.** Note how real and vital a part every feature of a book plays in Lamb's appreciation; the illustrations to Shakespeare, good or bad, have their uses for him, though not always their intended uses. In *My First Play* (53 : 10) one of the plates in Rowe's Shakespeare is mentioned. The Shakespeare Gallery engravings were a series of elaborate plates illustrative of Shakespeare, by different artists, published in 1802 under the name of the *Boydell* engravings, from the then Lord Mayor of London who commissioned them. — 26. **But in Folio**, the large paged editions of books which were in vogue from the early stages of the art of printing. The portrait of Lamb, prefixed to the present edition of the essays, is a sketch by Maclise representing Lamb engaged in the perusal of his folios; it is thus characteristic of Lamb as we think of him in connection with "books and reading." — 122 : 4. **I do not know a more heartless sight, etc.** Note the affection for what is old and quaint and rare revealed by the use of the word *heartless*. Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, with its odd conceits, its wealth of foreign quotation and out-of-the-way learning, its general chaos of accumulated scraps, is pre-eminently a book to be kept in its original form. — 10. **The wretched Malone.** Edmund Malone (1741-1812) was a really able critic and editor of Shakespeare, to whom our modern time is indebted for much good scholarship; but his unfortunate meddling with Shakespeare's bust in Stratford church, as described here, causes Lamb to be somewhat less than just to his merits. We see Lamb for once in a mood approaching indignation.

123 : 6. **Bishop Andrewes' sermons.** Lancelot Andrewes, Bishop of Winchester (1555-1626), was a divine of the Elizabethan time whose sermons became a religious classic for their sweetness of spirit and felicity of expression. They were favourite reading of Matthew Arnold.

123 : 8. **A solemn service of music.** In the essay on *Grace before Meat*, published a few months before this essay, Lamb proposes saying a grace before reading Milton and Shakespeare and

the *Fairy Queen* (127 : 21); an expression of the same reverence noteworthy here.

123 : 14. *The Tempest, or his own Winter's Tale*. Note the fitness of these titles to the occasion of reading. — What would Lamb convey by his peculiar use of the dash here to punctuate a paragraph? Note a similar use in the essay, *A Dissertation upon Roast Pig*, 144 : 24, 148 : 7. Is it his way of conveying what he intends as a light, almost fleeting, yet especially refined suggestion?

124 : 4. *Transpires . . . by piecemeal*. Note here the use of the word *transpire* in its accurate and proper sense, and distinguish this from the current misuse of the word as a synonym for *happen*.

124 : 12. "The Chronicle is in hand, sir." After this sentence the original essay, as published in the *London Magazine*, had the following paragraph: "As in these little Diurnals I generally skip the Foreign News, the Debates — and the Politics — I find the *Morning Herald* by far the most entertaining of them. It is an agreeable miscellany, rather than a newspaper." Compare the character of the thought conveyed in this paragraph with the rest of the essay, and consider if Lamb was wise in rejecting this from the essay as made up for its permanent book form.

124 : 17. *The old Town and Country Magazine*, an eighteenth century periodical (1769-1792), would have for a magazine much the same quaintness and out-of-dateness that so delighted Lamb in his favourite old books.

124 : 22. *Poor Tobin*, probably Lamb's friend mentioned in the essay on *Christ's Hospital*. see 26 : 3.

124 : 28. *Candide*, a satire in story form by Voltaire, attacking the shallow optimism of the eighteenth century, and full of Voltaire's mocking and audaciously irreligious spirit.

125 : 2. (*Her Cythera*). Does Lamb introduce here, in parenthesis, this name of a Grecian island sacred to Venus as a delicately antithetic suggestion of character to the suggestion conveyed in the name *Primrose Hill*? — 6. *I could have wished it had been — any other book*. This paragraph, on Richardson's novel, *Pamela*, or

Virtue Rewarded, is an example of Lamb's extraordinary good sense in criticism, yet delicacy in conveying it. The book, so strenuous in maintaining virtue, yet keeps the mind so occupied with the thought of vice that it produces largely the effect of an impure book.

125 : 17. **A volume of Lardner.** Nathanael Lardner, a Unitarian theologian (1684-1768) wrote on such subjects as *On the Credibility of the Gospel History*. Snow Hill, near where is now Holborn Viaduct, would be then, perhaps more than now, a much congested place in business hours; hence the incongruity of such reading in such circumstances.—23. **The five points**, in the Calvinistic theology current in Lamb's day, were :—Original Sin, Predestination, Irresistible Grace, Particular Redemption, and the Final Perseverance of the Saints. It would take less than "an illiterate encounter with a porter's knot or a bread-basket," one may conjecture, to leave Lamb indifferent to such points as these.

In the original magazine form of the essay, suggested no doubt by this Unitarian minister's untimely reading, Lamb introduced the following story of himself: "I was once amused—there is a pleasure in *affecting* affectation—at the indignation of a crowd that was jostling in with me at the pit-door of Covent Garden theatre, to have a sight of Master Betty—then at once in his dawn and his meridian—in *Hamlet*. I had been invited quite unexpectedly to join a party, whom I met near the door of the playhouse, and I happened to have in my hand a large octavo of Johnson and Steevens's Shakespeare, which, the time not admitting of my carrying it home, of course went with me to the theatre. Just in the very heat and pressure of the doors opening—the *rush*, as they term it—I deliberately held the volume over my head, open at the scene in which the young Roscius had been most cried up, and quietly read by the lamplight. The clamour became universal. 'The affectation of the fellow,' cried one. 'Look at that gentleman *reading*, papa,' squeaked a young lady, who in her admiration of the novelty almost forgot her fears. I read on. 'He ought to have his book knocked out of his hand,' exclaimed a pursy

it, whose arms were too fast pinioned to his side to suffer him to execute his kind intention. Still I read on — and, till the time came to pay my money, kept as unmoved, as Saint Antony at his Holy Offices, with the satyrs, apes, and hobgoblins, mopping, and making mouths at him, in the picture, while the good man sits undisturbed at the sight, as if he were sole tenant of the desert. — The individual rascals (I recognised more than one of their ugly faces), had damned a slight piece of mine but a few nights before, and I was determined the culprits should not a second time put me out of countenance." Query: Is this paragraph, interesting as it is, too much of a digression from Lamb's essential subject even for a piece which claims to be only Detached Thoughts?

126 : 3. "Snatch a fearful joy." Quoted from Gray's *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*. — Martin B — was Martin Charles Burney, a friend of the Lambs. — 5. *Clarissa*. *Clarissa Harlowe*, Richardson's most famous novel. — 10. A quaint poetess of our day. Lamb here quotes a poem by his sister, Mary Lamb, published in a volume of her editing, entitled *Poetry for Children*, 1809.

GRACE BEFORE MEAT

PAGES 127-127

In this and the following essay Lamb takes up in his characteristic way phases of a subject which profoundly interested him, mainly from its spiritual relations, namely, the subject of bodily appetite. Earlier papers of his approached the subject in a more direct way. — papers on *Palux on Appetite*, *Confessions of a Drunkard*, and a poem, *Farewell to Tobacco*. The "chief failing" of Lamb has been mentioned in the *Introduction* (see p. 16); but from all that he wrote and from his convivialities it is impossible to conclude that he was really a slave to intemperance, or anything of a glutton. The essays before us, indeed, are quite opposite in implication; they make for a delicacy and justness of taste which from the undeniable pleasures of the palate retain only what is fine

and elevating. The essay on *Grace before Meat*, with all its lightness and humour, is really concerned to restore to its proper place the religious sentiments associated from time immemorial with eating; the essay on *A Dissertation upon Roast Pig*, while its subject would seem to appeal merely to the gourmand and glutton, yet in the end robs the theme of all coarseness of suggestion.

A critical article by Robert Southey in the *Quarterly Review* deplored in Elia the lack of "a sounder religious feeling"; it was probably the common suspicion, on the part of the conservative and orthodox, of any attitude to religion which is unconventional. The criticism was based apparently on several passages in Lamb's essays; but in a letter of reply to Southey, Lamb conjectures that this one may have furnished the main occasion. He says: "I am at a loss what particular essay you had in view (if my poor ramblings amount to that appellation) when you were in such a hurry to thrust in your objection, like bad news, foremost.—Perhaps the paper on *Saying Graces* was the obnoxious feature. I have endeavoured there to rescue a voluntary duty—good in place, but never, as I remember, literally commanded—from the charge of an undecent formality. Rightly taken, sir, that paper was not against graces, but want of grace; not against the ceremony, but the carelessness and slovenliness so often observed in the performance of it."—The reader may well note whether, instead of being unfriendly to a "sounder religious feeling," the essay is not rather in the interest of it. It was not Lamb's way to inculcate religious, or indeed serious sentiments, in a didactic way; his temperament and perhaps his lifelong experience forbade it; see *Introduction*, p. 18. But all the more finely and truly his innate reverence and tolerance and sympathy with the good comes out "between the lines"; the present essay furnishes a good occasion to verify this.

127 : 9 The germ of the modern grace. In both this and the following essay, Lamb begins by assuming the method of the scholar, then just coming in but since then the prevailing method in research, of tracing things to their origin; thus he assumes the rôle of the

philosopher. Note how this gives him occasion to draw at the outset the contrast between "the shouts and triumphal songs" (l. 6), which would be the farthest remove from the expression of his real sentiment, and the "implied and silent gratitude" (l. 13), which makes the grace an inner and genuine religious impulse.

127 : 20. For books, those spiritual repasts. See note on 123 : 8, in the foregoing essay. — 128 : 7. Utopian Rabelaisian Christians. Lamb has in mind here a section of Rabelais (I. lii-lyii), in which is described the Abbey of Thélème, founded by Gargantua for the cultivation of the reasonable and Christian graces. Rabelais, a French priest of the Reformation time, though his writings are full of the coarseness and dirt of his age, was really a power in his humorous way to bring in an era of juster thought and religious good sense; and the section here alluded to is especially notable for this. In speaking of these Utopians Lamb imitates to some extent the Rabelaisian style, especially in his list of adjectives, l. 4, which is quite characteristic of Rabelais and the pretentious words he uses. The name *Homo Humanus* (human man), taken from Rabelais, is in accord with his practical intent. — If Southey would take exception to Lamb's religious looseness, it would be as likely to have been from his apparently approving use of Rabelais, who for the devout-minded was a horrible example of impiety, as from anything in the essay.

129 : 12. The heats of epicurism. Note the intense, almost exaggerated language of coarse and animal sense, into which Lamb falls in describing the pleasures of gourmandism; see ll. 5-15; 130 : 11-18; 131 : 5-11. Over against this descriptive language one may set the words in which are described "these temperate dreams of the divine Hungerer," in which Lamb borrows in part the words of Milton; 132 : 7-27. — 20. To praise the Gods amiss. The phrase is a reminiscence of Milton, *Comus*, l. 177.

130 : 13. I would have them sit down as Christians. This contains the real point and purpose of the essay; see Lamb's answer to Southey, quoted in the second paragraph of the introductory note

above. — 22. **When Jeshurun waxed fat.** See *Deuteronomy* xxxii. 15. Jeshurun was the poetic name of the Israelite people; and in the passage referred to the nation is described under the figure of a fattened steer. The passage, verses 13-15 is descriptive, in Biblical language, of the effects on a nation of unaccustomed and abundant things to eat. The passage is a favourite with Lamb; see above, 26 : 16, and note. — 24. **Anything but a blessing.** See Virgil, *Æneid*, iii. 247-257. The allusion is not so much to the behaviour in connexion with eating as to the instincts of the "harpynature." The figure is resumed and applied to the guests at "some great Hall feast," 131 : 3; where the "impatient harpies" are compared with "these Virgilian fowl." — 131 : 7. **True thankfulness (which is temperance).** Consider the justness of this identification.

131 : 15. **A table richly spread, etc.** Milton, *Paradise Regained*, ii. 340-347.

131 : 27. **A gaudy-day at Cambridge.** Cambridge was Milton's university (Trinity College); and the reference is to some special holiday feast, which by students and dons would be observed at their common meal in Hall. — 28. **A Heliogabalus,** a Roman Emperor who, from his excesses and licentiousness, became the type of the coarsest luxuries. — 132 : 5. **He that disturbed him, etc.** Note the inverted, or so-called chiasitic, construction of the sentence. — 10. **As appetite is wont to dream, etc.** *Paradise Regained*, II. 264-278. The scripture scenes mentioned by Milton are: "By the brook of Cherith," 1 *Kings* xvii. 2-6 — a favourite scripture scene with Lamb; see 23 : 2; "how he fled," etc., 1 *Kings* xix. 3-8; "Daniel at his pulse," *Daniel* i. 12, 13. This last line is also quoted, or rather used, in *Imperfect Sympathies*; see 105 : 27.

133 : 4. **Seem to involve, etc.** It will be observed that Lamb's objection is not a reasoned objection but purely a matter of feeling and sentiment. — 18. **Neither gluttons nor wine-bibbers.** Lamb adopts the phrase used in reproach of Jesus by the austere ones of his generation, *Matthew* xi. 19.

133 : 28. **I suspect his taste in higher matters.** This harmony

of taste, whether bodily or mental, which Lamb desiderates, is of a piece with his idea that the whole man should be self-consistent and harmonious; compare 104: 11, and note. — 134: 1. Physiognomical character. Perhaps Lamb means physiological. Would the latter word be more accurate? — 11. Sapidless. Nearly synonymous with tasteless, but a word more in accord with Lamb's quiet vocabulary. In the next essay he uses the word *Sapors*, from the same root; 145: 15. — 13. The author of the Rambler, viz. Dr. Samuel Johnson, whose uncouthness of person and manner was in striking contrast to his intellectual sanity and sound sense. — 19. My thin face. What connotation gives fitness to this epithet? — 25. Some great fish — his Dagon. Dagon, supposed from the derivation of the word to have been worshipped under the form of a fish, was a god of the Philistines; see *Judges* xii. 23; 1 *Samuel* v. "Kissing his hand" was the idolatrous gesture of worship; see *Job* xiii. 27; and the words "no ark but the fat tureen" are an allusion to the ark which was the sacred shrine of the Hebrew worship. — 135: 1. Of the Chartreuse. The Carthusian monks of the monastery of Grenoble in France are bound to strict asceticism in food; in the essay on *A Quaker's Meeting* their vow of silence is also mentioned. — 6. Which children hear tales of, at Hog's Norton. A place on the borders of Oxfordshire and Warwickshire, where are to be heard some curious legends, concerning which Mr. E. V. Lucas writes: "An old proverb runs: 'I think thou wast born at Hogg's Norton, where piggis play upon the organs'. . . . One account of the origin of the legend is the organ-playing of a villager named Pigg. In Wilt's *Recreations* there is this epigram on pigs devouring a bed of pennyroyal, commonly called organs: —

"A goodwife once a bed of organs set,
The pigs came in, and eat up every wit;
The goodman said, 'Wife, you your garden may
Hog's Norton call, here pigs on organs play.'"

—10. Of next authority. The word *next* is used here exactly in its primitive sense in *parum*. It is the superlative of *magis*.

136: 5. With some sectaries, that is, members of some sects, or divisions of a sect. — 13. Might not Lucian have painted. The scene of the two *diogenes* suggests to Lamb a situation which might have been felicitously described by the religious satirist Lucian, who wrote his *Diogenes* *al'os dios* in the second century ridiculing the absurdities of the popular Greek religion. — 17. Flamines are pagan priests attached to particular gods.

137: 2. Most awful and overwhelming to the imagination. Lamb seems merely to refer to the implication in the phrase "good creatures," i. e. the mystery and greatness of which went to his mind accentuated by the contrasted meagreness of the hare. — 13. Trousers instead of mutton. The long blue gown over small-clothes and yellow stockings, the traditional garb of the charity-bags of Christ's, may help us understand how deacons are concerned here.

A DISSEKTATION UPON ROAST PIG

PAGES 138-148

Among the "books which are no books" enumerated by Lamb in his *Scattered Thoughts on Books and Reading* he includes scientific treatises (138: 25). For the formal and systematic methods of scientific and philosophic research, indeed, he had little liking. He was aware, however, of the increase of the scientific spirit in his time; he felt the atmosphere of it around him, and it was quite within the scope of his playful satire to perceive a line of thought in its terms, as if he were talking to with the prevailing tone of the day. The present essay is an instance in point. The rather pretentious and learned name by which it is called, a *Theriacarium*, denotes something more precise and deeply investigated than an essay, yet on the other hand its subject, *Roast Pig*, is so homely, so little suggestive of the dignity of science, that one

origin in a Chinese or other folk-story, Lamb's friend Thomas Manning, a mathematician and traveller, to whom Lamb attributes the translating of the manuscript, is said to have contributed articles on Chinese jests to the *New Monthly Magazine*; and this story, with its preposterous exaggeration of the primal custom, is much such a story as would be told in jest, and perhaps picked up by a traveller. One writer, indeed, claims to give the story which was lent by Manning to Lamb, and which Lamb reproduced in a version to suit his purpose. This is the uncoloured form in which he gives it:—

"A child, in the early ages, was left alone by its mother in a house in which was a pig. A fire took place; the child escaped, the pig was burned. The child scratched and pattered amongst the ashes for its pig, which at last it found. All the provisions being burnt, the child was very hungry, and not yet having any artificial aids, such as golden ewers and damask napkins, began to lick or suck its fingers to free them from the ashes. A piece of fat adhered to one of his thumbs, which, being very savoury alike in taste and odour, he rightly judged to belong to the pig. Liking it much, he took it to his mother, just then appearing, who also tasted it, and both agreed that it was better than fruit or vegetables.

"They rebuilt the house, and the woman, after the fashion of good wives, who, says the chronicle, are now very scarce, put a pig into it, and was about to set it on fire, when an old man, one whose observation and reflection had made a philosopher, suggested that a pile of wood would do as well. (This must have been the father of economists.) The next pig was killed before it was roasted, and thus

"From low beginnings,
We date our winnings."

—6. Their great Confucius. All this sentence about Confucius is a whimsical invention of Lamb's, following out his learned vein.
—22. No less than nine in number. Note how Lamb maintains accuracy of usage with the word *less*. *Ten* refers more naturally to

quantity; *fewer* to number. He could have said "no fewer than nine"; but in using *less* instead he restores accuracy of usage by adding the words *in number*. This is but calling attention to the care which a good writer, without seeming to do so, bestows on language; most of Lamb's choice of words and phrasing will bear as strict test as this. — 139 : 15. **Overflowed his nether lip.** Even so casual a thing as his mouth watering Lamb exaggerates in description, in keeping with the uncouth primitiveness of the boy. "In his booby fashion," l. 18, is in the same conception. After the word *crackling* below, the original essay had the sentence, "He stood in a posture of idiot wonder." Lamb's long dwelling on the amplifying details of the incident is not to describe the boy's slow understanding; it adds, of course in ironical vein, to our sense of the momentousness of the discovery. — 140 : 7. **Heeded not any more, etc.** Lamb is describing in his assumed scientific fashion a creature so crudely human that the purely animal appetite, and the satisfaction of it, absorbs his whole nature. Much of the language along here is conformed to that conception; it is the contrast to what he will be describing, or implying, later in the essay; compare, for instance, 144 : 6-18, and the paragraph at the bottom of p. 145.

142 : 1. **Then an inconsiderable assize town.** Observe how throughout the rest of the story Lamb maintains the humorous and sham-scientific tone of the account by mixing in modern elements — anachronisms as they are called — belonging to a later stage of civilization, and of course impossible in the rude state of society assumed. Think of assize towns, of trial by jury, of the machinery of a court, of reporters, of town and country houses, of insurance offices, and of a science of architecture, in a social state in which men were just learning to eat their food cooked instead of raw, and with mental faculties so primitive that they deemed they must burn a house down in order to roast a pig! To express all this in the sober language of verisimilitude belongs of course to Lamb's elaborate literary play.

142 : 27. **A sage arose, like our Locke.** In Lamb's time John Locke (1632-1704) was the standard philosopher and sage; his *Essay concerning the Human Understanding* was, and indeed still is, one of the classics of philosophy. — 143 : 5. **Concludes the manuscript.** If the story told in note 138 : 1 is authentically Lamb's source, this moral or application, here couched in learned language, is represented by the verse couplet at the end. It is interesting also to note the little suggestions of the original which Lamb has enlarged upon.

143 : 8. **Without placing too implicit faith.** Observe that this is Lamb's hint that he has been fooling all the while; a similar hint has already been noted at the end of the essay on *The South-Sea House*; see 76 : 22. — 12. **That pretext and excuse.** This paragraph is Lamb's transition from the archaeological account to the theme; consider what application of the thought he uses to make the transition, and how skilfully he leads the paragraph on so as to end in the words of his subject, here put in small capitals.

143 : 15. **The most delicate.** Observe, as a further element of structure, that this single sentence paragraph purports to lay down a kind of proposition, which is to be proved and maintained in what succeeds. It is a part of Lamb's plan in this *Dissertation* to adhere to the form and dignity of a learned treatise.

144 : 1. **Childish treble, etc.** Observe here how carefully Lamb uses softened terms to describe the pig's voice, here using Shakespeare's term "childish treble" (*As You Like It*), instead of the word we use, *squeak*, which latter would not so well fit the object he is endeavouring to describe.

144 : 17. **One ambrosian result.** The whole paragraph, of which this is the conclusion, is noteworthy for the pains with which Lamb accumulates descriptive details to make realizable an exceedingly delicate subject, namely, what Lamb conceives to be the superlative of refined bodily taste. He seems to be labouring to describe a food from which all that is coarse or animal or of gluttonous suggestion is eliminated; hence his summarizing epithet *ambrosian*.

borrowed from the food of the gods. With this descriptive paragraph one may well contrast the language used of Bo-bo's orgy of eating, 140 : 1-4, and the paragraph beginning at 140 : 26. One is inclined to think that Lamb's chief interest in writing this essay, as a sheer literary feat, was in achieving the descriptive triumph exemplified in this paragraph.

144 : 22. The extreme sensibility. Note the implicit personification, or rather personal feeling, involved here. The conjunction of "radiant jellies" and "shooting-stars" may be Lamb's reminiscence of a conceit of the metaphysical poet Donne, who in his *Eclogues* says:—

"As he that sees a star fall runs apace,
And finds a jelly in the place."

This is in accord with old-time popular ideas. — On the dash at the end of the paragraph, see note on 123 : 14.

145 : 8. Ere sin could blight, etc. Quoted from Coleridge's *Epitaph on an Infant*. The whole stanza runs:—

"Ere Sin could blight, or Sorrow fade,
Death came with friendly care;
The opening bud to Heaven conveyed,
And bade it blossom there."

Notice that in the second line, for *friendly*, Lamb substitutes *timely*. Was this from carelessness, or for finer adaptation to Lamb's subject? — 12. Reeking sausages. From the fact that on 159 : 2 Lamb uses the same epithet of sausages, one may conclude that they were no favourite delicacy of his. — 14. Might be content to die. Reminiscences of the closing line of Milton's *Epitaph on Shakespeare*, changed a little in the borrowing, as usual with Lamb.

145 : 15. The best of Sapor. A quaint word, in the manner (if not the actual usage) of Sir Thomas Browne. The paragraph which it introduces is another of Lamb's *tour de force* of

description and fine discrimination. The descriptive words and antitheses are worthy of careful study.

146: 3. He is — good throughout. Note how the dash is used here and compare note on 87: 1.

146: 13. Chicken. The plural without the -s, like *fowl* in the next line. — 14. "Tame villatic fowl." From Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, l. 1695. — 18. "Give everything." Lear's expression is, "I gave you all"; *King Lear*, ii. 4. 253. — I make my stand upon pig. In an essay entitled *Thoughts on Presents of Game*, Lamb records, however, a change of taste in later years: "Time was when Elia . . . preferred to all a roasted pig. But he disclaims all such green-sickness appetites in future."

146: 26. My good old aunt. Probably the Aunt Hetty mentioned in a similar connection in *Christ's Hospital*, 22: 22; or, as it is Elia writing, the whole story may be an invention or taken from some other person's experience.

148: 1. (In a philosophical light merely). Lamb keeps up the philosophical tone assumed at the beginning, and probably reminds us again of it because he is fantastically running the inquiry into rather attenuated questions for abstruse learning to indulge in. It is an imitation, however, of the learned trifling in which the Schoolmen used to indulge.

148: 9. When I was at St. Omer's. A French Jesuit College; where, on account of the casuistic questions which make a large part of the training, such a question as this would presumably be a natural subject of debate. Lamb puts the wording of the question in Latin, to intimate that in a college of sacred learning, like St. Omer's, the debate was conducted, like a learned disputation, in Latin. Of course Lamb was never there, though Elia might so represent himself. — 16. I forget the decision, naturally, of a question whose decision either way would amount to so little.

148: 17. His sauce should be considered. This paragraph reads like a kind of appendix, or supplement, added, in accordance with his humorous claim to be writing a *Dissertation* in the

interest of thoroughness and exhaustiveness. At the same time, it will be noted that he makes this final paragraph a plea for what he really has at heart, fineness and delicacy of taste, as applied no less to the stomach than to the mind.

THE PRAISE OF CHIMNEY-SWEEPERS

PAGES 149-159

Scarcely another essay of Lamb's could be found in which his keen interest in everything that pertains to childhood and innocence, and less directly to poverty and hardship, finds clearer expression than in this essay on *The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers*. In his characteristic way, however, he disguises this sentiment under an appearance of interest in what is odd and out-of-the-way, — in a class of human beings of whom little is known or cared, and whose claim on attention is their dirt and grotesqueness. The sympathy that he betrays, too, is by no means of the maudlin kind such as people nowadays lavish on slum-dwellers and criminals and labouring children; if chimney-sweepers are a wronged and abused class, their wrongs come out between the lines; but meanwhile he gets into their life and so to say their mind, and kindles a tender sympathy on the part of the reader, as no amount of sentimental weeping or railing against social iniquities could do. The tone and feeling of the essay, for what they reveal of the heart of Charles Lamb, may be called eminently healthy.

As to its style, while to an unusual degree it reflects Lamb's quaint personality, it would be for that very reason a disastrous style to imitate. The student will do well to go over the essay with this thought in mind. To use such odd words and turns of expression, unless one had both Lamb's temperament and experience in literature, would be sheer affectation; and it would incur inevitably the vice of pretentious expression known as "fine writing." Yet when under these strangely worded sentences we read Lamb's personality, we read with approval and delight.

149 : 3. **Through their first nigritude**, or blackness; just such a word as Sir Thomas Browne would employ. — It is worth noting how characteristically he chooses chimney-sweepers at a time which connotes as little as possible of the dirt and squalor of their occupation, nothing at all of the inhumanity connected with it, and as much as possible of childlike innocence and tenderness. With this paragraph may be compared the paragraph of the foregoing essay in which he discriminates the fitting age of pigs for roasting; see 143 : 17 ff. — 7. **Like the peep peep of a young sparrow**. Their professional cry of *sweep, sweep* had been used by Blake in his *Songs of Innocence* as if it were 'weep, 'weep, 'weep, 'weep — perhaps because Blake was touched by their pitiable lot. Lamb, at once more prettily and more tenderly, compares their cry to the sparrow's note, and even improves on that.

149 : 10. **I have a kindly yearning**. In the next line but one he calls them "these young Africans of our own growth"; it is noteworthy also that on 105 : 5 he expresses similar "yearnings of tenderness" for negroes. — 11. **Innocent blacknesses**. Note that Lamb leaves this paragraph punctuated only with the dash, like the paragraph, 144 : 19–24, as if it were an unfinished collection of details which the reader might supplement with further descriptive epithets as they occur to him.

149 : 13. **Almost clergy imps**. Note the playful paradox here; also how the idea of the paragraph is conformed to the clergy figure.

149 : 21. **As he went sounding on**, etc. This does not fit the operation of crawling into a chimney; the form of his imagined journey is rather an echo of the idea of *Fauces Avernæ* and the Virgilian scenery. Doubtless too Lamb has here a reminiscence of a line in Wordsworth's *Excursion*, Book iii: — "Went sounding on, a dim and perilous way"; — a line the component phrases of which are also to be found in Wordsworth's tragedy of *The Borderers*. — 150 : 6. **I seem to remember**, etc. Just such a story as a nurse would tell a small child to enforce a childish moral. — 11. **Appari-**

tion of a child. This stage direction comes in *Macbeth*, iv. 1, to indicate part of the symbolism by which the ominous future is revealed to Macbeth.

150 : 21. The sweet wood yclept sassafras. In these paragraphs descriptive of sassafras tea and its effect on chimney-sweepers it is, especially, that Lamb indulges in his "fine" language, perhaps as if conscious that he is after all describing a rather insignificant thing. The words and phrases need not be pointed out; but one feels that Lamb is in his playful vein at such phrases as "infusion of milk and sugar"; "adventured to dip"; "commended ingredients"; "a cautious premonition to the olfactories"; "attenuate and soften the fuliginous concretions"; "o'er-night vapours"; "sumptuous basin"; "eased of the o'ercharged secretions," and many more. In what sense might this use of language be called ironical?

151 : 17. Too much of bitter wood. This figure is moulded on the contrasted suggestion of "sweet wood" in l. 21 of the previous page. — 22. Penniless. On 24 : 11 Lamb uses the word *penniless*, with a different spelling, to connote a different shade of meaning — 27. Than philosophy can inculcate. In the original essay, as published in the *London Magazine*, Lamb wrote "explicate." The remark betrays partly Lamb's evident interest in the phenomena of bodily taste, and partly the elaborate trifling which his fine language has already advertised.

152 : 22. Him shouldest thou haply encounter. In this sentence Lamb seems to bring his exaggerated style to the climax; and he begins with the ill-fashioned device of placing the object before the verb, thus making a quaint sounding sentence construction, in which the odd wording and phraseology will fit.

153 : 5 ff. The rest of the essay, it will be observed, is in much less inflated style than what has just been noted; though of course Lamb's idiosyncrasies of diction are not lacking. Does the somewhat different character of the subject-matter explain this? — 9. Something more than forgiveness. Note how accurately

he shades his feeling toward the jocularity of chimney-sweepers by this indirect expression. — It will be remembered that the title of the essay is *The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers*; he is finding reasons why they may be praised. It will be worth while to consider, in the paragraphs from here to 156 : 15, and to put into definite statement, the ascending scale of evidence for according them not only tolerance but respect. These reasons are of course not formal and systematic, but fanciful, not to say whimsical; but even so they afford evidence of Lamb's delicate sensibility. — 16. **There he stood**, etc. Study carefully the construction of this very irregular sentence,—how he breaks it up entirely by his parenthesis about Hogarth, and has to begin again at l. 24 by repeating the opening words. — 21. **Such a joy, snatched out of desolation**. May not Lamb's keen feeling of this, in the squalid life of the chimney-sweeper, contain much of the secret of his extravagant praise? May it not really be that his heart aches for the class, and he passes it off, according to his custom, in fun? Compare *Introduction*, p. 18. — 22. **Hogarth** (1697-1764) was an eminent painter of the eighteenth century, who devoted himself especially to pictures of the customs of his day, and pictures, often in series, containing a moral lesson. He was a humorist as well as painter, and much of his work, while rugged and strong, verges on caricature. The name of one of his celebrated paintings, *The March to Finchley*, is given here.

154 : 6. To "air" them as frugally as possible. The word "air" in this sense is very commonly used nowadays; it would seem that here it was just coming into vogue. The line "I beg but leave to air this jewel," in *Cymbeline*, ii. 4. 96, may have furnished Lamb the suggestion. — 13. **A sable cloud**, etc., quoted from Milton, *Comus*, l. 221. — 22. **Almost infantile abductions**. Lamb may be hinting in his gentle way at what was a notorious evil of his day; which, however, he uses not by way of invective, but to account for the finer manners observable in these waifs. — 25. **Many noble Rachels**. See *Jeremiah* xxi. 15, a prophecy brought up in *Matthew* ii. 18, in connection with the mourning caused by the massacre of the infants

in Bethlehem. — 28. **The recovery of the young Montagu.** Edward Mortley Montagu (1713-1776), who seemed to have an irresistible bent for wandering, which led him to become a great traveller. He ran away several times from school, and during one time in his life was a chimney-sweeper.

155 : 3. **At Arundel Castle,** in Sussex, the seat of the dukes of Norfolk, whose family name was Howard. No trace of this story can be found in the legends of Arundel Castle; it is probably either Lamb's invention, or attributed to this place from some other. — 9. **Where Venus lulled Ascanius.** Reference to Virgil, *Æneid*, i. 691.

156 : 12. **This sentiment of a pre-existent state.** Lamb's explanation of this nobility in chimney-sweepers is of course only half in earnest; but the idea was probably a current subject of philosophical inquiry in his time. Wordsworth, it will be recalled, founded his *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* on the idea of pre-existence, though he does not commit himself to the truth of it.

156 : 16. **My pleasant friend Jem White,** whom in a foot-note to his essay *On some of the Old Actors* Lamb calls "my merry friend Jem White," was a schoolmate of Lamb's at Christ's Hospital, and a much esteemed friend. As the context shows, he was a humorist; he was also something of a man of letters. — 157 : 16. **James White.** Note that when, as head waiter, he has the dignity of being in charge of the first table, he is called by his formal name, James White. — 18. **Bigod.** By this name, borrowed from the family name of the old-time Earls of Norfolk, Lamb designates his friend John Fenwick; if one may be called a friend who was an inveterate borrower of money and ne'er-do-weel. In the essay on *The Two Races of Men*, under this same name Bigod, it is said of him: "In his perigesis, or triumphant progress throughout this island, it has been calculated that he laid a tithe part of the inhabitants under contribution. . . . With such sources, it was a wonder how he contrived to keep his treasury always empty." — 20. **Rochester in his maddest days.** James Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (1647-1680).

was one of the most notorious of the wits and boon companions of Charles II — 158 : 4. Whereat the universal host, etc. The expression is modelled on Milton, *Paradise Lost*, i. 541-543 : —

"At which the universal host upsent
A shout that tore Hell's concave, and beyond
Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night."

— 159 : 5. Golden lads and lasses, etc. From the first stanza of a song in *Cymbeline*, iv. 2. 250, quoted probably from memory. Shakespeare's words are, "Golden lads and girls all must," etc. The opening lines are : —

"Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages."

The poet Tennyson on his death bed called for Shakespeare's works and died with his hand resting on this song.

159 : 10. Among the pens, *i.e.* the booths or enclosures of the Fair. — 12. The glory of Smithfield departed forever. The expression was later adopted in a letter announcing, in 1855, the end of Bartholomew Fair.

DREAM-CHILDREN: A REVERIE

PAGES 160-165

This short piece, which Mr. E. V. Lucas, one of Lamb's recent editors, calls "in some ways, I think, his most perfect prose work," is called, *A Reverie*. The children it describes, we are told at the outset, are *Dream-Children*, but the manner of telling has little if anything of a dreamy character; so that it is with something like surprise that we find the narrator waking up at the end (165 : 16) and revealing that all was unreal, "such stuff as dreams are made of." The essay represents at its purest Lamb's favourite vein of reflection: on the simple pure mind of children, on old and

deceased things full of memories, and on those who are or have been dear to him. It was published a few months after the death of his brother, John Lamb, who is one of the persons described in the essay; and doubtless embodies sentiments set in motion by his death. Two or three months after the essay was published, Lamb wrote to Wordsworth: "We are pretty well save colds and rheumatics, and a certain docility to everything, which I think I may date from poor John's Loss; . . . Death overset one, and put one not long after the recent grief."

We can feel the distinctive style of this essay best, perhaps, by thinking how it compares with the essays just read. It has no touch of the elaborate quaintness so characteristic of a large part of the essay on *The Death of Chimney-Sweepers*, nor of the laborious descriptive writing of the *Dissertation upon Rustic Fire*, nor of the analytic treatment of minds and temperaments in *Imperfect Sympathies* and other essays. It reads as if for once Lamb would discard all self-conscious literary effort and surrender himself to the spontaneous thoughts of the childlike mind. And the result, as can be felt rather than analysed, is a very perfect charming piece of prose. It will be noted that the whole piece is comprised in a single paragraph; as a single topic, indeed, it does not bear articulation into headings and stages, as the paragraph division would indicate. Nor does it need much annotation: it is simply to be read and enjoyed for its own sake.

160:4. My little ones. The reverie is told as if it were a father speaking to his children, and the relationships—in great-grandmother, uncle, etc.—are conformed to this; still the expression "my little ones" leaves the relationship undefined.—5. Their great-grandmother Field. In the essay on *Marking End, in Herfordshire*, Lamb says, "My grandmother was a Hutton, married to a Field" (46:1). As transpires later in this essay (L. 21), this grandmother was the housekeeper in one of the large old English country mansions to be found in all parts of the country. So far he is relating facts of his own family his-

tory; when, however, he puts this great house in Norfolk he is departing from the fact, perhaps to keep from too strict identification with reality. The house, which was in Hertfordshire, was Blakesware, the family seat of the Plumers, Mrs. Field's employers. Lamb has described it as it was in its decay in his essay, *Blakesmoor in H—shire*. In connection with one of the clerks in South-Sea House, also (75 : 10), he refers to "the Plumers of Hertfordshire."—7. **A hundred times bigger, etc.** It was a large house indeed, but this is of course given in the exaggerated language of childish feeling.—8. **The scene . . . of the tragic incidents, etc.** The ballad of *The Children in the Wood* comes from Norfolk, as Lamb puts this house in Norfolk; though the house he has in mind was in Hertfordshire, the adjoining county. By so doing he connects the scene of the story with the carvings on the chimney-piece (l. 13). The story of the Children in the Wood was a great favourite with Lamb, both from the ballad and from Morton's play, which latter he has several times referred to; see 58 : 2-4; 113 : 25.—17. **One of her dear mother's looks.** One of the charming things to be noted in this piece is the silent responses on the part of the children, and how these correspond to the sentiment of what is narrated; see here : 161 : 10; 18; 21; 162 : 9; 163 : 10; 164 : 21; 165 : 2. These silent responses articulate the piece into a kind of dream dialogue, in which on the children's part looks and actions take the place of speech.—25. **A newer and more fashionable mansion.** A residence built by William Plumer at Gilston in Hertfordshire, a few miles from Blakesware. It was not "in the adjoining county" (161 : 1) : it is so represented here, however, because Lamb has chosen to put the old house in Norfolk; see note on 160 : 6.—161 : 18. **Spread her hands.** What thought on Alice's part would Lamb imply by this?—24. **A cruel disease, called a cancer.** Mrs. Field died of cancer of the breast in 1792.—27. **Because she was so good and religious.** Note that the story told to the children, while full of the purest religious feeling, is not at all "goody-

poorly," nor does it draw a moral lesson apart from what the account contains intrinsically. — 162 : 2. An apparition of two infants. "There is a legend in the Plumer family concerning the mysterious death of two children and the loss of the baronetcy thereby—Sir Walter Plumer, who died in the seventeenth century, being the last to hold the title" (Lucas). Many old English houses have their mysterious legends of this kind. In the essay on *Blackmoor in H—shire* Lamb mentions "that haunted room—in which old Mrs. Bastle died—whereinto I have crept, but always in the day-time, with a jesson, and a soaking curiosity, terrified, to half communication with the past." — 13. The old busts of the Twelve Cæsars. In *Blackmoor in H—shire*, too, Lamb mentions these busts and their effect on his childish imagination: "Mine too, BLACKMOOR, was thy noble Marble Hall, with its mosaic pavements, and its Twelve Cæsars—stately busts in marble—ranged round; of whose countenances, young reader of faces as I was, the frowning beauty of Nero, I remember, had most of my wonder; but the mild Gallia had my love. There they stood in the stillness of death, yet freshness of immortality." — 163 : 17. Their uncle, John L—. John Lamb, Charles Lamb's elder brother, had died on October 26, 1821; and this essay was published in the *London Magazine*, in January, 1822. This part of the essay may be regarded as a kind of tribute to his memory, written while the loss was still fresh; the children, 164 : 21, are represented as in mourning for their uncle. In the essay on *My Kinsman* Lamb gives an extended description of his brother's characteristics of character, representing him as his cousin James Ellis (compare this essay, last line). A few words may here be quoted. "James is an inexplicable enigma. Nature hath her unities, which not every artist can penetrate; or, if we feel, we cannot explain them. The pen of Virgil, and of none since his, could have drawn J. E. entire—those fine Scandinavian lights and shades, which make up his story." Then, after a masterly analysis of his contradictory traits of character, the account concludes: "Do I

mention these seeming inconsistencies to smile at, or upbraid, my cousin? Marry, heaven, and all good manners, and the understanding that should be between kinsfolk, forbid! — With all the strangeness of this *strangest of the Elias* — I would not have him one jot or tittle other than he is: neither would I barter or exchange my wild kinsman for the most exact, regular, and everyway consistent kinsman breathing." — 164 : 1. A lame-footed boy. It is not clear that Lamb is here speaking of his own experience; though a peculiarity of his walking, in later life, was, that he was plantigrade, or as we say, flat-footed. — 4. He became lame-footed too. By the fall of a stone on his leg, in 1796, John Lamb became a cripple for life. In l. 20, Lamb mentions "when the doctor took off his limb"; but it cannot be ascertained otherwise that John Lamb's leg was actually amputated. In a letter to Coleridge soon after the accident Lamb reports that the doctor "gives us every hope that there will be no need of amputation." — 27. I courted the fair Alice W—n. In his essay on *New Year's Eve*, Lamb mentions this Alice W—n in a similar way: "Methinks it is better that I should have pined away seven of my goldenest years, when I was thrall to the fair hair, and fairer eyes, of Alice W—n, than that so passionate a love-adventure should be lost." This, as we see, is an anticipation of Tennyson's

"'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all."

It is hard to make out, however, that this maiden was anything more than a kind of dream or abstraction of Lamb's, into which he imported his youthful fancies of love. As early as 1796, when Mary Lamb became insane, he gave "his solemn engagement that he would take her under his care for life" (see *Introduction*, p. 17); and with this obligation he gave up all thoughts of marriage (though see note introductory to *Barbara S—*, p. 192). There has indeed been suggested, as the original of Alice W—n, a certain Ann Simmons, who lived near Blakesware; and this con-

jecture is strengthened by the fact that she married a Mr. Bartrum, or Bartram (compare 165 : 12); but not much can be concluded from this. The whole matter is very likely one of Lamb's mystifications. — 165 : 13. We are only what might have been. So we must sum up the meaning of this strangely beautiful reverie. — 14. *The tedious shores of Lethe.* Lamb gets this idea from Virgil, *Æneid*, vi. 748 f., a passage of which the translation is: "All these when they have travelled round the circle of a thousand years, God summons in mighty throngs to the river of Lethe, that so, forgetful of the past, they may go back to visit again the vault of the sky, and begin without reluctance to return to the body." What Virgil describes as waiting for return to earth, in the transmigration of souls, Lamb represents as waiting for existence. — 18. *The faithful Bridget* (*i.e.* his sister, Mary Lamb) unchanged . . . John L. (whom he himself explains as James Elia) was gone forever. This was the end of his tribute to the brother, who never seems to have been very congenial in life, but whose dearness to Lamb was realized after death; see 164 : 15. A further reference is made to him as if he were a stranger, in the foot-note at bottom of p. 72.

THE SUPERANNUATED MAN

PAGES 166-176

Some slight disguises of date and circumstances excepted, this essay is a true account of the facts of Charles Lamb's life, and a still truer transcript of his inner sensations and feelings. So momentous a change in life as the transition from work to leisure, from daily care for income to assured provision for all reasonable wants, could not fail to be a subject which, as a mere psychological study, would appeal to him vividly; and such experience was not imagined, but real. The circumstances of the case may best be presented by transcribing the minute of the Directors of the East India Company on the date of March 29, 1825: "Resolved that

the resignation of Mr. Charles Lamb, of the Accountant-general's office, on account of certified ill health, be accepted, and it appearing that he has served the Company faithfully for 33 years, and is now in receipt of an income of £730 per annum, he be allowed a pension of £450 . . . to commence from this day."

Born in 1775, at the time of his retirement Lamb was fifty years old. He lived nearly ten years after this, years in which, still as years go in middle life, he could have what many long for, leisure to do just what he pleased. He had in himself, too, resources such as most business men lack (cf. 171 : 2); his life's real interests, indeed, were so predominantly beyond the accountant's office that in time used out of working hours he had conquered an eminent position as man of letters. The coming ten years ought, it would seem, to have been his best and most fruitful literary years. They did not, however, turn out so. He had already done about all of his best and most characteristic work. In the April number of the *London Magazine* for 1825 appeared his *Barbara S—*, which of course must have been written before his retirement; and of the essays that we have read in this edition this was the latest. The *Magazine* itself, too, though passing into a new series, had long been declining; a fact which Lamb, who was by far the most important contributor, felt keenly. Of the February number of this year he wrote to Bernard Barton: "Our second Number is all trash. What are T. and H. [the publishers, Taylor and Hessey] about? It is whip sillabub, 'thin sown with aught of profit or delight.' Thin sown! not a germ of fruit or corn. Why did poor Scott die! [Its first and ablest editor.] There was comfort in writing with such associates as were his little band of scribblers, some gone away, some affronted away, and I am left as the solitary widow looking for watercresses." In August, 1825, it was sold to other publishers, "indeed a dead weight," as Lamb described it; and its subsequent history is of little interest. So with Lamb, in many ways "the good old days were dead." He was set free from the irksome drudgery of his clerkship, only to

find that with all its austere absorption of his energies it had done him more good than he had realized. The present essay has between the lines many hints of this; though lightly touched and charming, like all of Lamb's work, it is shadowed with a more than rhetorical melancholy.

The two mottoes prefixed to the essay originally stood over the two parts into which the essay was divided; the point where its division occurred is on 173: 27, "A fortnight has passed," etc. The reader will note the change of sentiment in the two parts of the essay. To the present editor the second part seems less sincere, more as if, in bending himself to accept his new and unwanted leisure, the author were whistling to keep his courage up, under an uneasy sense that his life's fruitful activity is over.

166: 1. To waste the golden years of thy life. With this judgement passed upon his years of desk-work contrast his light-hearted, whimsical account of his occupation in *Oxford in the Vacation*; see 77: 14 f. "I confess that it is my humour, my fancy — in the fore-part of the day, when the mind of your man of letters requires some relaxation — . . . to while away some good hours of my time in the contemplation of indigos, cottons, raw silks, piece-goods, flowered or otherwise." All this, which he chose to describe as his recreation, has here become "the irksome confinement of an office." — 6. To forget that there are such things as holidays. In the same essay, in spite of his playful identification of deadgery with amusement, he speaks of holidays and saints' days in such terms as to betray what a welcome relief they were. They were, after all, "sprinklings of freedom" (78: 19); and so far from forgetting that there were such things, — "I was as good as an almanac in those days. I could have told you such a saint's day falls out next week, or the week after" (79: 9-11). In *Christ's Hospital*, too, the holidays are recalled with much rest.

166: 10. Six and thirty years, more correctly three and thirty years, as indicated in the Directors' minute quoted above. Lamb,

after six months' employment in the South-Sea House, passed to the East India House in the spring of 1737.

166 : 18. It is true I had my Sundays to myself; but, etc. Lamb is by no means the only one to be repelled by the austere gloom of a London Sunday; it is indeed almost proverbial. Characteristically, however, he does not fall at the Puritan cause of it, nor does he advocate a reform in Sunday observance; he makes his objection to it personal to himself. In the original essay, after the word *recreation* (167 : 1), he appended the following foot-note: "Our ancestors, the noble old Puritans of Cromwell's day, could distinguish between a day of religious rest and a day of recreation; and while they exacted a rigorous abstinence from all amusements (even to the walking out of nursery maids with their little charges into the fields) upon the Sabbath; in the line of the superstitious observance of the Saints' days, which they abrogated, they humanely gave to the apprentices, and poorer sort of people, every alternate Thursday for a day of relaxation and recreation. A strain of piety and policy to be commended above the profane mockery of the Stuarts and their Book of Sports." — 167 : 5. Those eternal bells. London is, or has been, a noisble place for the ringing of church bells; the manner of ringing them, too, in peals and chimes and continuous swing, may well become a strain on sensitive nerves. — 21. Look anything but comfortable. Note that this description of the effects of Sunday is a libel of passage of the larger subject, — the effect of an unlimited leisure. Old Lamb, as a master of literary construction, introduces this paragraph with such intent?

167 : 24. My native fields of Hertfordshire. It is as James Elia that Lamb says this. Lamb himself was London born and bred; his mother's family, however, as we have seen, came from Hertfordshire.

168 : 15. My health and my good spirits flagged. One reason given for his retirement, as we have seen above, was "certified ill health." The fact is evident also from numerous letters of his written at this period. — 16. A dread of some crisis. In his

delicately strong, nervous temperament his ill health would quite naturally take such form. What he here ascribes to ill health he has already attributed to the temperament of the cashier of the South-Sea House (see 59: 20): "Melancholy as a gilt-cat over his counter all the forenoon, I think I see him, making up his cash (as they call it) with tremulous fingers, as if he feared every one about him was a defaulter; in his hypochondry ready to imagine himself sick; haunted, at least, with the idea of the possibility of his becoming one." Perhaps this description of the services that began to invade his imagination may indicate that after all a clerk's occupation did not sit easy upon him, that he was very close to the truth when he made Elia say (65: 25): "Living accounts and accountants puzzle me. I have no skill in figuring." With this compare 168: 11-13. We cannot think that his life was ever so materially in the accountant's element as, for instance, John Tapp (72: 3), who "thought an accountant the greatest character in the world, and himself the greatest accountant in it." 73: 17. "With Tapp form was everything. His life was formal. His actions seemed ruled with a ruler." In short, as an accountant Lamb was out of his element; his virtual breakdown at fifty seems to prove it. — 22. The wood had entered into my soul. Lamb records a similar thing of his book-worm friend G. D. in *Oxford in the Vacation* (82: 17): "With long boring, he is given almost into a book." It is Lamb's version of the idea expressed in one of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* (cxi): —

"And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand."

168: 28. L —, the junior partner in the firm. The name, as also the name H — below, is not identifiable, to represent his business as a partnership firm, may be one of Lamb's disguises; so also the date of his release, the 12th of April, instead of March 29. The disguise is elaborately kept up in 170: 8, "Gratitude forbids me to conceal their names," a rare indication, this, in Lamb's habit of playful irony, that their names are concealed. Needless to say, all

these names are feigned. — 170 : 12. *Esto perpetua*! as if he had said, "Long live the firm of Boldero, Merryweather, Bosanquet, and Lacy."

170 : 13. I felt stunned, overwhelmed. In a letter written to Bernard Barton, he says : "Dear B. B. — My spirits are so tumultuary with the novelty of my recent emancipation, that I have scarce steadiness of hand, much more mind, to compose a letter." — 15. Thinking I was happy, and knowing that I was not. It may be noted of all Lamb's minute descriptions of states of mind, his favourite literary employment, that none of them are descriptions of simple or unmixed states; there is, as here, a kind of paradoxical combination of moods or traits, a kind of spiritual collision, about all of them. Note how this furnishes the key for the amplification in all this paragraph. — 171 : 16. *That's born*. A quotation, with one or two words changed, from Middleton's *The Mayor of Queneborough* : —

"I know no more the way to temporal rule,
Than he that's born and has his years come to him
In a moorish desert."

Query : does Lamb substitute "some green desert" to fit the sentiment better to his own hope of coming fruitful years? Note the words "calculating upon," L. 19.

172 : 1. As long as any preceding thirty. This came true of the succeeding ten years of Lamb's life in a way not quite contemplated here. He thought, doubtless, of busy days and hours at his most congenial pursuits; as a matter of fact much time hung heavy on his hands, and he could hardly think what to do. The second part of this essay (see especially p. 174) already betrays something of this.

172 : 12. A Tragedy by Sir Robert Howard. The name of the Tragedy was *The Vestal Virgin; or, The Roman Ladies*. Among the half-idle occupations to which Lamb devoted himself in the ensuing years, as a refuge from ennui, was searching for the noteworthy passages of the Garrick plays in the British Museum

which he contributed in 1826 to Hone's *Table Book*, and the passage here quoted was included in a collection entitled *Serious Fragments* at the end.

172: 20. To visit my old desk-fellows. In the letter to Byron from which a quotation has been given above (note on 170: 13) he writes: "I went and sat among 'em all at my old 33 years desk yester morning; and dence take me if I had not yearnings at leaving all my old pen-and-ink fellows, merry sociable lads, at leaving them in the Lurch, fag, fag, fag." — 173: 21. My "works!" A conceit of Lamb's which he was fond of repeating. In the *Preface* prefixed to the *Last Essays of Elia*, published 1833, in which he announced the death of Elia, he thus speaks of a visit to his place of business in search of his surviving manuscripts: "They pointed out in a most obliging manner the desk, at which he had been planted for forty years; showed me ponderous tomes of figures, in his own remarkably neat hand, which, more properly than his few printed tracts, might be called his 'works.'" He speaks in the same way of his book-keeping also in his *Autobiography*, — 24. More MSS. in folio than ever Aquinas left. St. Thomas Aquinas, (1225 or -27-1274), the great theologian of the Roman Catholic Church, filled seventeen folio volumes with his works, as they were collected and published in 1570, — 25. My mantle I bequeath among ye. An allusion to Elijah's mantle falling on Elisha; see 2 *Kings* iii. 15.

173: 27. A fortnight has passed. The second part of the original essay, beginning here, opens a new stage in the description of his feelings, the stage in which he becomes wonted to his new manner of life, — 174: 1. I boasted of a calm. Compare especially 171: 2-14. — 4. I missed my old chains, forsooth. Lord Byron has used the same idea at the end of his *Prisoner of Chillon*: —

"The very walls and I grew friends,
So much a long communion tends
To make us 'what we are': — even I
Regained my freedom with a sigh."

— 6. **A poor Carthusian.** See note on 135 : 1. — 21. **The gayer flags of Pall Mall.** In the fashionable quarters of the West End; a contrast to the business sections of the City, where are Fish Street Hill, Fenchurch Street, and Mincing Lane, just mentioned. — 22. **The Elgin marbles,** which are among the most valued treasures of the British Museum, are carvings procured from the Parthenon and other ruined buildings of Athens by Lord Elgin, and deposited in the Museum in 1816. — 24. **Time stands still in a manner to me.** This sentence may be regarded as the key to this section of the essay. — 175 : 9. **That unfortunate failure of a holiday.** See paragraph beginning 166 : 18, and note there. — 18. **Lucretian pleasure.** An allusion to the opening lines of Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, II, which have given a stock expression to the language. The lines are : —

"Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis,
E terra magnum alterius spectare laborem;
Non quia vexari quemquam est iucunda voluptas,
Set quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est ; "

or in Mallock's translation : "It is sweet when winds are troubling the waters on the great deep, to watch from land the great labours of another ; not because there is any light-hearted pleasure in knowing that another is suffering, but because it is pleasant to realize from what sufferings you yourself are free." Lucretian pleasure this ; pagan, not Christian. — 23. **Nor too little to do.** Here Lamb strikes perversely, and only half sincerely, into his vein of ironical eulogy of idleness. It reads, as has been intimated above, like whistling to keep his courage up. In the *London Magazine*, however, after the words "what is it all for ?" l. 22, Lamb supports the sentiment by citing some verses from Cowley, and also the following lines of his own, "written in my Clerk state" : —

"Who first invented work — and bound the free
And holiday-rejoicing spirit down

To the ever-haunting *Importunity*
 Of business, in the green fields, and the town —
 To plough, sown, and, spade — and oh! most sad,
 To this dry drudgery *at the desk's dead wood?*
 Who but the Being unfixed, alien, stark good,
 Selfishless Satan! he who his ungod
 Task ever piles, and rotatory turnings,
 That round and round inevitably reel —
 For wrath divine hath made him like a wheel —
 In that *not* realm from whence are no returnings
 Where toiling, and turning, ever and aye
 He, and his thoughts, keep passive workaday!

He refers also, under another attribution, to an earlier sonnet of his own, to which, as he says, "I subscribe . . . *two words*," of which a few lines are:—

They talk of time, and of time's galling yoke,
 That like a millstone on man's mind doth press,
 Which only works and business can redress:
 Of divine Leisure such foolies are spoke,
 Wounding her fair gifts with calumnious stroke."

Lamb lived to find such sentiments only half true: — 24. **NOTHING TO DO.** "Positively the best thing a man can have to do, is nothing, and next to that perhaps — good works." (From a letter of Lamb's to Bernard Barton.) — 25. I am altogether for the life contemplative.

"But slight I feel with silent meditation,
 Assu'd free from that fiend Occupation —
Impudent Labor, which my spirits hath broke —
 I'd drink of time's rich cup, and never surfeit."

A further quotation from the *Sonnet* given above. — 176: 1. Those accursed cotton-mills. An anticipation, but in entirely different motive and spirit, of Ruskin's antipathy to modern commercialism. — 4. As low as to the fiends. Quotation from *Hamlet*, II. 2. 519.

176: 5. **I am no longer * * *** In the original form of the essay he had "J—s D—n," and signed the essay "J. D.," giving his address as "Beaufort Terrace, Regent Street; late of Ironmonger Court, Fenchurch Street."—6. **Retired Leisure.** The phrase is quoted from Milton, *Il Penseroso*, l. 49.—7. **Known by my vacant face and careless gesture.** With this sentence and the succeeding Lamb begins to reveal the fact that he is not wholly serious in his praise of unlimited leisure; he is paying for it in some disadvantages which give the thought a sad connotation.—8. **Nor with any settled purpose.** This describes his appearance and feelings after a fortnight had passed (173: 27), and will do for a literary description of Elia. Of Lamb himself, however, Mr. Dykes Campbell writes: "When the summer of 1826 came round, Lamb, having had a full year's experience of freedom from the 'drudgery of the desk's dead wood,' felt that some kind of regular employment was a necessity." Accordingly he engaged in the work on the Garrick plays mentioned in note 172: 12. Of this work he wrote to Barton: "It is a sort of office to me; hours ten to four, the same."—13. **The state of the opera.** This furnishes occasion for his Latin quotation immediately succeeding; the word *opera*, it will be observed, is merely the plural of *opus*, and from the same root as *operatum*.—So with these words, to an unrealized degree prophetic, Lamb concludes his memorial of his retirement from task-work.

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